

March 2, 2021



The House Children, Families & Seniors Subcommittee
412 House Office Building
402 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Re: House Bill 691 Pub. Rec./Staff and Volunteers of Domestic Violence Centers

The First Amendment Foundation writes to express our concerns with House Bill 691, which would exempt the home addresses and photographs of staff and volunteers of domestic violence centers from public records. While we do not oppose protection for current staff and employees of domestic violence centers, we do object to extending the exemption to all **former** staff and volunteers.

The statement of public necessity asserts that personnel and their family members are at a heightened risk of harm from perpetrators of domestic violence. However, the bill provides no information or evidence that former employees or volunteers continue to be forever at risk of harm.

Home address and photograph exemptions create unequal privacy protections for only certain professions in this state, and place additional burdens on state employees who must redact thousands of documents.

The Florida Constitution requires that an exemption bill state with specificity the public necessity justifying the law and be not broader than necessary. This bill fails to justify applying this exemption to former staff and volunteers for all time after their work at a domestic violence center, and thus is far broader than necessary.

We request that HB 691 be amended to narrow the exemption. Another home address exemption will further undermine the constitutional right of access and contribute to unequal privacy protections based on employment.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

With best regards,

FIRST AMENDMENT FOUNDATION

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pamela C. Marsh".

Pamela C. Marsh
President

cc: The Honorable Chris Spowls, Speaker, Florida House
Jim Baltzelle, Associated Press, Chair, First Amendment Foundation
Samuel Morley, General Counsel, Florida Press Association
Lisa Nellesen Savage, Chair, Florida Society of News Editors

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