

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

**BILL #:** CS/CS/HB 19 Public Records/Yellow Dot Critical Motorist Medical Information Program  
**SPONSOR(S):** Government Operations Subcommittee; Transportation & Highway Safety Subcommittee; Slosberg  
**TIED BILLS:** CS/HB 17 **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** CS/SB 350

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Transportation & Highway Safety Subcommittee	12 Y, 0 N, As CS	Thompson	Miller
2) Government Operations Subcommittee	12 Y, 0 N, As CS	Stramski	Williamson
3) Economic Affairs Committee		Thompson	Creamer

### SUMMARY ANALYSIS

CS/HB 17 authorizes the governing body of a county to create a yellow dot critical motorist medical information program for the purpose of assisting emergency medical responders and program participants in the event of a motor vehicle accident or a medical emergency involving a participant's vehicle. After submitting a completed application, a participant is given a yellow dot decal to affix onto the lower left corner of his or her vehicle's rear window, a yellow dot folder, and a form that contains certain personal and medical information about the participant, to be stored in the participant's vehicle.

This bill, which is linked to the passage of CS/HB 17, creates a public record exemption for personal identifying information of a participant in a yellow dot critical motorist medical information program that is held by the a county participating in such program. The bill provides that the public record exemption is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and stands repealed on October 2, 2019, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature. It also provides a statement of public necessity as required by the State Constitution.

The bill may have an insignificant negative fiscal impact on local governments that opt to participate in a yellow dot program. The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on the state. See FISCAL COMMENTS.

The bill provides an effective date that is contingent on the passage of CS/HB 17 or similar legislation.

**Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting for final passage of a newly created or expanded public record exemption. The bill creates a public record exemption; thus, it requires a two-thirds vote for final passage.**

## FULL ANALYSIS

### I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

#### A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

##### **Present Situation**

##### Public Records

Article I, s. 24(a) of the State Constitution sets forth the state's public policy regarding access to government records. This section guarantees every person a right to inspect or copy any public record of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. The Legislature, however, may provide by general law for the exemption of records from the requirements of Article I, s. 24(a) of the State Constitution. The general law must state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption (public necessity statement) and must be no broader than necessary to accomplish its purpose.<sup>1</sup>

Public policy regarding access to government records is addressed further in the Florida Statutes. Section 119.07(1), F.S., guarantees every person a right to inspect and copy any state, county, or municipal record. Furthermore, the Open Government Sunset Review Act<sup>2</sup> provides that a public record or public meeting exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose. In addition, it may be no broader than is necessary to meet one of the following purposes:

- allows the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, which administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption.
- protects sensitive personal information that, if released, would be defamatory or would jeopardize an individual's safety; however, only the identity of an individual may be exempted under this provision.
- protects trade or business secrets.

##### Yellow Dot Program

The yellow dot program is a system to alert first responders at an accident scene to search for medical information about the injured, especially if the injured is unconscious or unable to speak. The program provides medical personnel with vital information about the victim during the first critical hours after injury when prompt treatment is most effective.<sup>3</sup>

The program began in Connecticut in 2002, and now, with slight variations, is in counties scattered across at least eight other states: Kansas, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Virginia, Alabama and New York.<sup>4</sup> Participants in the program receive a yellow dot sticker to place on their rear window. The sticker alerts emergency services personnel to look for a corresponding yellow folder in the glove box.<sup>5</sup> The yellow folder may include the injured participant's name, photograph, emergency contact information, medical information, hospital preference, and other vital information.

##### CS/HB 17 (2014)

CS/HB 17 authorizes the governing body of a county to create a yellow dot critical motorist medical information program for the purpose of assisting emergency medical responders and program participants in the event of a motor vehicle accident or a medical emergency. After submitting a completed application, a participant is given a yellow dot decal to affix onto the lower left corner of his

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<sup>1</sup> Section 24(c), Art. I of the State Constitution.

<sup>2</sup> See s. 119.15, F.S.

<sup>3</sup> Additional information about the yellow dot program is available at [www.yellow-dot.com](http://www.yellow-dot.com) (last viewed on February 28, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> "Yellow Dot car program speeds to help crash victims." Larry Copeland, USA Today (May 24, 2011) at [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2011-05-23-yellow-dot-seniors-drivers-baby-boomers\\_n.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2011-05-23-yellow-dot-seniors-drivers-baby-boomers_n.htm) (last viewed on February 28, 2014).

or her vehicle's rear window (or a clearly visible location on a motorcycle), a yellow dot folder, and a form for the participant's personal and medical information.

The form, which is placed inside the yellow dot folder and stored in the participant's vehicle, contains the following information:

- the participant's name;
- the participant's photograph;
- emergency contact information for no more than two persons;
- the participant's medical information, including medical conditions, recent surgeries, allergies and medications;
- the participant's hospital preference; and
- contact information for no more than two physicians.

### **Effect of Proposed Changes**

The bill provides that personal identifying information of a participant in a yellow dot critical motorist medical information program, which is held by a county participating in such program, is exempt<sup>6</sup> from public record requirements. The bill provides that the public record exemption is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and stands repealed on October 2, 2019, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature. It also provides a statement of public necessity as required by the State Constitution.<sup>7</sup>

The bill provides an effective date that is contingent upon the passage of CS/HB 17 or similar legislation, if such legislation is adopted in the same legislative session or an extension thereof and becomes law.

#### **B. SECTION DIRECTORY:**

- Section 1: Creates an unnumbered section of law to create a public record exemption for information of participants in a yellow dot critical motorist medical information program.
- Section 2: Provides a statement of public necessity.
- Section 3: Provides an effective date contingent upon the passage of CS/HB 17 or similar legislation.

## **II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT**

#### **A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:**

1. Revenues:  
None.
2. Expenditures:  
None.

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<sup>6</sup> There is a difference between records the Legislature designates as exempt from public record requirements and those the Legislature deems confidential and exempt. A record classified as exempt from public disclosure may be disclosed under certain circumstances. *See WFTV, Inc. v. The School Board of Seminole*, 874 So.2d 48, 53 (Fla. 5th DCA 2004), review denied 892 So.2d 1015 (Fla. 2004); *City of Riviera Beach v. Barfield*, 642 So.2d 1135 (Fla. 4th DCA 1994); *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So.2d 687 (Fla. 5th DCA 1991). If the Legislature designates a record as confidential and exempt from public disclosure, such record may not be released, by the custodian of public records, to anyone other than the persons or entities specifically designated in the statutory exemption. *See* Attorney General Opinion 85-62 (August 1, 1985).

<sup>7</sup> Section 24(c), Art. I of the State Constitution.

**B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:**

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments.

**C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:**

None.

**D. FISCAL COMMENTS:**

Participation in the yellow dot program by a county is not mandatory. The bill could create a minimal fiscal impact on a county that opts to create a yellow dot program, because staff responsible for complying with public record requests could require training related to the creation of the public record exemption. In addition, a participating county could incur costs associated with redacting the exempt information prior to releasing a record. The costs, however, would be absorbed, as they are part of the day-to-day responsibilities of county government.

**III. COMMENTS**

**A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:**

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable. The bill does not appear to require counties or municipalities to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds, reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenue in the aggregate, nor reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

2. Other:

Vote Requirement

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting for final passage of a newly created or expanded public record exemption. The bill creates a new public record exemption; thus, it requires a two-thirds vote for final passage.

Public Necessity Statement

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a public necessity statement for a newly created or expanded public record exemption. The bill creates a public record exemption; thus, it includes a public necessity statement.

Breadth of Exemption

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a newly created or expanded public record exemption to be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law. The bill creates a public record exemption for personal identifying information of a participant in a yellow dot critical motorist medical information program, which is held by a county participating in such program. The exemption does not appear to be in conflict with the constitutional requirement that the exemption be no broader than necessary to accomplish its stated purpose.

### Right to Privacy

Article I, s. 23 of the State Constitution grants all Florida citizens the right to privacy. Consequently, Florida courts have recognized patients' rights to secure the confidentiality of their health information (medical records); however, that right must be balanced with and yields to any compelling state interest.<sup>8</sup>

#### B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

#### C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

##### OTHER COMMENTS: Records of Emergency Calls

Section 401.30, F.S., requires emergency medical services entities that are licensed<sup>9</sup> by the Department of Health to maintain accurate records of emergency calls. Such records that contain patient examination or treatment information are confidential and exempt from public record requirements and may not be disclosed without the consent of the person to whom they pertain.<sup>10</sup> As this exemption only applies to records that are acquired by emergency medical services as a result of an emergency call, it does not appear to protect yellow dot critical motorist information held by a participating county.

##### OTHER COMMENTS: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)

The federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Privacy Rule<sup>11</sup> protects individually identifiable health information held by "covered entities." Covered entities include health plans, health care clearinghouses, and health care providers. A health care provider is defined as any person or organization who furnishes, bills, or is paid for health care in the normal course of business. However, a health care provider is considered a covered entity if it transmits any health information electronically.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, if a state, county, or local government performs functions that make it a covered entity, compliance with the HIPAA Privacy Rule is required.<sup>13</sup> A county entity that is tasked with implementing a yellow dot program may be subject to the HIPAA Privacy Rule if it comes within the definition of "health care provider."

## **IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES**

### Transportation & Highway Safety Subcommittee

On January 14, 2014, the Transportation & Highway Safety Subcommittee adopted a strike-all amendment to HB 19 before reporting it favorably as a committee substitute. The amendment made technical changes to conform to the Senate companion. Specifically, the strike-all:

- revises the level of protection the exemption provides from confidential and exempt to simply exempt;
- narrows the exemption to only apply to the personal identifying information of a participant in a yellow dot critical motorist medical information program;
- clearly defines the records custodian to be the governing body of a county participating in the program;
- removes the exception to the exemption, which was a bill drafting error; and
- conforms the public necessity statement to the revised exemption.

<sup>8</sup> See *State v. Johnson*, 814 So.2d 390 (Fla. 2002); distinguished in *Limbaugh v. State of Florida* 887 So.2d 387 (Fla. 4th DCA 2004); and *Rasmussen v. S. Fla. Blood Serv. Inc.*, 500 So.2d 533 (Fla. 1987) (privacy interests of blood donors defeated AIDS victim's claim to obtain via subpoena names and addresses of blood donors who may have contributed the tainted blood).

<sup>9</sup> Section 401.23(13), F.S., defines "licensee" as any basic life support service, advanced life support service, or air ambulance service licensed by the Department of Health pursuant to part III of ch. 401, F.S.

<sup>10</sup> Section 401.30(4), F.S.

<sup>11</sup> Pub. L. 104-191, 110 Stat. 1936.

<sup>12</sup> 45 CFR 160.103.

<sup>13</sup> See 45 CFR 160.103, for more information regarding HIPAA definitions of covered entity, health care provider, health plan and health care clearinghouse.

This analysis is drafted to the committee substitute as passed by the Transportation and Highway Safety Subcommittee.

Government Operations Subcommittee

On March 5, 2014, the Government Operations Subcommittee adopted an amendment to CS/HB 19 and reported the bill favorably as a committee substitute. The amendment:

- clarifies that the public record exemption applies to exempt information held by counties participating in a yellow dot critical motorist medical information program, and not just to information held by county governing bodies;
- revises the repeal date of the exemption to conform to the Open Government Sunset Review Act; and
- conforms the public necessity statement to the exemption.

This analysis is drafted to the committee substitute as passed by the Government Operations Subcommittee.