

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 1019 Pub. Rec./Location of Safe Houses

SPONSOR(S): Spano and others

TIED BILLS: HB 1017 **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 1436

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Healthy Families Subcommittee		Entress	Brazzell
2) Government Operations Subcommittee			
3) Health & Human Services Committee			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery, which involves the exploitation of persons for commercial sex or forced labor. HB 1017 addresses various criminal aspects of human trafficking. Safe homes and short-term safe houses provide services and residential care to victims of human trafficking.

This bill (HB 1019), which is linked to HB 1017, provides a public records exemption for information about the location of safe houses and other facilities housing victims of human trafficking, as defined in s. 787.06, F.S. Specifically, the bill provides that the information regarding the location of safe houses that is held by either the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or a unit of local government, including the following entities is confidential and exempt from s. 119.07(1), Florida Statutes, and s. 24(a), Article I of the State Constitution:

- Law enforcement agencies;
- Tax collectors;
- Clerks of courts; and
- Property appraisers.

The bill provides that the public records exemption is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and stands repealed on October 2, 2019, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.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 does not appear to have a fiscal impact on the state.

The bill will take effect on the same date that HB 1019 or similar legislation takes effect.

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 records exemption. The bill creates a public records exemption; thus, it requires a two-thirds vote for final passage.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

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.¹

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 Act² 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.

Human Trafficking

Florida law defines human trafficking as "soliciting, recruiting, harboring, providing, enticing, maintaining, or obtaining another person for the purpose of exploitation of that person."³ Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery, which involves the exploitation of persons for commercial sex or forced labor.⁴ Trafficking subjects victims to force, fraud, or coercion.⁵ Children experiencing this type of sexual exploitation often become bonded with their exploiters and do not see themselves as victims. These children experience trauma and are exposed to danger but are often unable to leave their exploiter to seek help.

Safe Houses

The Safe Harbor Act provided for "safe houses". Safe houses are homes for sexually exploited children who have been adjudicated dependent or delinquent and need to reside in a secure⁶ residential facility.⁷ Safe houses must provide a living environment that has set aside gender-specific, separate, and distinct living quarters for sexually exploited children and must have awake staff members on duty 24 hours a day. Safe houses must also hold a license as a family foster home or residential child-caring agency. Each facility must be appropriately licensed in this state as a residential child-caring agency as

¹ Section 24(c), Art. I of the State Constitution.

² See s. 119.15, F.S.

³ S. 787.06 (2)(d), F.S.

⁴ S. 787.06(1)(a), F.S.

⁵ Healthy Families Subcommittee Presentation by Professor Terry Coonan, FSU Human Rights Center, 1/14/14, s. 787.06(1)(a), F.S.

⁶ The term "secure" is defined as a facility providing services is supervised 24 hours a day by staff members who are awake while on duty.

⁷ S. 409.1678 (1)(b), F.S.

defined in s. 409.175, F.S., and must have applied for accreditation within 1 year after being licensed.⁸ A safe house serving children who have been sexually exploited must have available staff or contract personnel who have the clinical expertise, credentials, and training to provide:

- Security;
- Crisis intervention services;
- General counseling and victim-witness counseling;
- A comprehensive assessment;
- Residential care;
- Transportation;
- Access to behavioral health services;
- Recreational activities;
- Food;
- Clothing;
- Supplies;
- Infant care;
- Miscellaneous expenses associated with caring for these children;
- Provide necessary arrangement for or provision of educational services, including life skills services and planning services for the successful transition of residents back to the community; and
- Ensuring necessary and appropriate health care and dental care.⁹

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) or the local community-based care organization is required to assess sexually exploited dependent children for placement in a safe house if the child is older than six. The assessment is required to incorporate and address the following:

- Current and historical information from any law enforcement reports;
- Psychological testing or evaluation that has occurred;
- Current and historical information from the guardian ad litem, if one has been assigned;
- Current and historical information from any current therapist, teacher, or other professional who has knowledge of the child and has worked with the child; and
- Any other information concerning the availability and suitability of safe-house placement.

The child may be placed in a safe house if such placement is determined to be appropriate as a result of this assessment and if one is available, but placement is not required.¹⁰

There are currently two safe houses in Florida, with a total of 11 beds statewide. A third safe house is projected to open in 2014 with 7 beds.¹¹ If a trafficker learned the location of a safe house and went to the safe house, the safe house staff as well as the individuals residing in the safe house could be in danger of physical or emotional harm.

⁸ According to DCF, there are currently no entities that accredit safe houses and safe houses are not sure what type of accreditation they are required to have. No safe houses have applied for accreditation at this time.

⁹ S. 409.1671, F.S.

¹⁰ S. 39.524, F.S.

¹¹ E-mail Correspondence with the Florida Department of Children and Families, 12/20/13, on file with subcommittee staff.

Effect of Proposed Changes

Safe Houses

The bill provides a public record exemption for information about the location of safe houses and other facilities housing victims of human trafficking, as defined in s. 787.06, F.S. Specifically, the bill provides that the information regarding the location of safe houses that is held by either the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or a unit of local government, including the following entities, is confidential and exempt from s. 119.07(1), Florida Statutes, and s. 24(a), Article I of the State Constitution:

- Law enforcement agencies;
- Tax collectors;
- Clerks of courts; and
- Property appraisers.

The bill specifies that the public records exemption includes facilities operated by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) under 409.1678, F.S.¹²

The bill provides that the public records exemption is subject to the Open Sunset Review Act and stands repealed on October 2, 2019, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

The bill provides statements of public necessity as required by the State Constitution.¹³

The bill provides an effective date contingent upon the passage of HB 1017 or similar legislation.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

- Section 1:** Amends s. 119.0713, F.S., relating to local government agency exemptions from inspection or copying of public records.
- Section 2:** Amends s. 409.1678, F.S., relating to safe harbor for children who are victims of sexual exploitation.
- Section 3:** Creates an unnumbered section of law relating to a public necessity.
- Section 4:** Provides for an effective date.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

¹² DCF does not operate safe houses under s. 409.1678. See part III of this analysis.

¹³ Section 24(c), Art. I of the State Constitution.

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

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 records exemption. The bill creates a public records 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 or public meeting exemption. The bill expands current public record exemptions; thus, it includes a public necessity statement.

Breadth of Exemption

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a newly created public record or public meeting exemption to be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law. The bill creates a public record exemption for information relating to the identification and location of safe houses. The exemption does not appear to be in conflict with the constitutional requirement that the exemption must be no broader than necessary to accomplish its purpose.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

On lines 25-26, the bill states that the public records exemption applies to safe houses operated by the Department of Children and Families ; however, private providers operate safe houses. The bill should be amended to reflect this distinction.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES