

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Health Policy

BILL: SB 906

INTRODUCER: Senator Young

SUBJECT: Public Records/Health Care Facilities

DATE: January 12, 2018

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Looke	Stovall	HP	Pre-meeting
2.			GO	
3.			RC	

I. Summary:

SB 906 exempts building plans, blueprints, and other such drawings and diagrams that depict the internal structural layout or structural elements of a hospital, ambulatory surgical center, nursing home, hospice, or intermediate care facility for the developmentally disabled from the public records law.

The bill provides a statement of public necessity supporting the exemption and establishes an Open Government Sunset Review Act automatic repeal date of October 2, 2023, unless reviewed and saved from repeal by the Legislature.

This bill requires a two-thirds vote if each chamber for passage because it creates a public records exemption.

The provisions of the bill take effect upon becoming law.

II. Present Situation:

Public Records Law

The Florida Constitution provides that the public has the right to inspect or copy records made or received in connection with official governmental business.¹ This applies to the official business of any public body, officer or employee of the state, including all three branches of state government, local governmental entities, and any person acting on behalf of the government.²

¹ FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(a).

² *Id.*

In addition to the Florida Constitution, the Florida Statutes provides that the public may access legislative and executive branch records.³ Chapter 119, F.S., constitutes the main body of public records laws, and is known as the Public Records Act.⁴ The Public Records Act states that:

...it is the policy of this state that all state, county and municipal records are open for personal inspection and copying by any person. Providing access to public records is a duty of each agency.⁵

According to the Public Records Act, a public record includes virtually any document or recording, regardless of its physical form or how it may be transmitted.⁶ The Florida Supreme Court has interpreted public records as being “any material prepared in connection with official agency business which is intended to perpetuate, communicate or formalize knowledge of some type.”⁷ A violation of the Public Records Act may result in civil or criminal liability.⁸

The Legislature may create an exemption to public records requirements.⁹ An exemption must pass by a two-thirds vote of the House and the Senate.¹⁰ In addition, an exemption must explicitly lay out the public necessity justifying the exemption, and the exemption must be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the exemption.¹¹ A statutory exemption which does not meet these criteria may be unconstitutional and may not be judicially saved.¹²

When creating a public records exemption, the Legislature may provide that a record is “confidential and exempt” or “exempt.”¹³ Records designated as “confidential and exempt” may be released by the records custodian only under the circumstances defined by the Legislature.

³ The Public Records Act does not apply to legislative or judicial records. *Locke v. Hawkes*, 595 So. 2d 32 (Fla. 1992). Also see *Times Pub. Co. v. Ake*, 660 So. 2d 255 (Fla. 1995). The Legislature’s records are public pursuant to s. 11.0431, F.S. Public records exemptions for the Legislatures are primarily located in s. 11.0431(2)-(3), F.S.

⁴ Public records laws are found throughout the Florida Statutes.

⁵ Section 119.01(1), F.S.

⁶ Section 119.011(12), F.S., defines “public record” to mean “all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data processing software, or other material, regardless of the physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency.” Section 119.011(2), F.S., defines “agency” to mean as “any state, county, district, authority, or municipal officer, department, division, board, bureau, commission, or other separate unit of government created or established by law including, for the purposes of this chapter, the Commission on Ethics, the Public Service Commission, and the Office of Public Counsel, and any other public or private agency, person, partnership, corporation, or business entity acting on behalf of any public agency.”

⁷ *Shevin v. Byron, Harless, Schaffer, Reid and Assoc. Inc.*, 379 So. 2d 633, 640 (Fla. 1980).

⁸ Section 119.10, F.S. Public records laws are found throughout the Florida Statutes, as are the penalties for violating those laws.

⁹ FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(c).

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Halifax Hosp. Medical Center v. New-Journal Corp.*, 724 So. 2d 567 (Fla. 1999). See also *Baker County Press, Inc. v. Baker County Medical Services, Inc.*, 870 So. 2d 189 (Fla. 1st DCA 2004).

¹³ If the Legislature designates a record as confidential, such record may not be released to anyone other than the persons or entities specifically designated in the statutory exemption. *WFTV, Inc. v. The School Board of Seminole*, 874 So. 2d 48 (Fla. 5th DCA 2004).

Records designated as “exempt” are not required to be made available for public inspection, but may be released at the discretion of the records custodian under certain circumstances.¹⁴

Open Government Sunset Review Act

The Open Government Sunset Review Act (referred to hereafter as the “OGSR”) prescribes a legislative review process for newly created or substantially amended public records or open meetings exemptions.¹⁵ The OGSR provides that an exemption automatically repeals on October 2nd of the fifth year after creation or substantial amendment; in order to save an exemption from repeal, the Legislature must reenact the exemption.¹⁶

The OGSR provides that a public records or open meetings exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose and is no broader than is necessary.¹⁷ An exemption serves an identifiable purpose if it meets one of the following purposes *and* the Legislature finds that the purpose of the exemption outweighs open government policy and cannot be accomplished without the exemption:

- It allows the state or its political subdivision to effectively and efficiently administer a program, and administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption;¹⁸
- Releasing sensitive personal information would be defamatory or would jeopardize an individual’s safety. If this public purpose is cited as the basis of an exemption, however, only personal identifying information is exempt;¹⁹ or
- It protects trade or business secrets.²⁰

The OGSR also requires specified questions to be considered during the review process.²¹ In examining an exemption, the OGSR asks the Legislature to carefully question the purpose and necessity of reenacting the exemption.

If, in reenacting an exemption, the exemption is expanded, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are required.²² If the exemption is reenacted without substantive changes or if the exemption is narrowed, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote

¹⁴ *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So. 2d 687 (Fla. 5th DCA 1991).

¹⁵ Section 119.15, F.S. Section 119.15(4)(b), F.S., provides that an exemption is considered to be substantially amended if it is expanded to include more information or to include meetings. The OGSR does not apply to an exemption that is required by federal law or that applies solely to the Legislature or the State Court System pursuant to s. 119.15(2), F.S.

¹⁶ Section 119.15(3), F.S.

¹⁷ Section 119.15(6)(b), F.S.

¹⁸ Section 119.15(6)(b)1., F.S.

¹⁹ Section 119.15(6)(b)2., F.S.

²⁰ Section 119.15(6)(b)3., F.S.

²¹ Section 119.15(6)(a), F.S. The specified questions are:

1. What specific records or meetings are affected by the exemption?
2. Whom does the exemption uniquely affect, as opposed to the general public?
3. What is the identifiable public purpose or goal of the exemption?
4. Can the information contained in the records or discussed in the meeting be readily obtained by alternative means?
If so, how?
5. Is the record or meeting protected by another exemption?
6. Are there multiple exemptions for the same type of record or meeting that it would be appropriate to merge?

²² FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(c).

for passage are *not* required. If the Legislature allows an exemption to sunset, the previously exempt records will remain exempt unless otherwise provided for by law.²³

Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) Review of Health Care Facility Building Plans

The Office of Plans and Construction (Office) within the AHCA is primarily responsible for ensuring that hospitals, nursing homes, ambulatory surgical centers, and Intermediate Care Facilities for the Developmentally Disabled are safe, functional, and provide safety-to-life for the patients and residents. The Office reviews and approves facilities' plans and specifications and surveys their construction. These licensed health care facilities must notify the Office in writing before any equipment replacements, renovations, additions, or new facilities are created. Plans and specifications for such activities must be approved before any construction begins. Architects, engineers and other specially trained plans and construction personnel survey facilities under construction and, when necessary, write reports for required corrections to the construction before approval of the project is given.²⁴

Schematics, preliminary plans and construction documents received by the Agency and other government agencies for hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers, nursing homes and intermediate care facilities for the developmentally disabled are currently subject to release as public record. These plans include building floor plans, communication systems, medical gas systems, electrical systems, emergency generators, and other physical plant and security details. Recent security threats have been shared by state and federal security and emergency preparedness officials that describe the targeting of health care facilities by terrorists. Because architectural and engineering plans reviewed and held by government agencies include information regarding emergency egress, locking arrangements, critical life safety systems and restricted areas these plans could be used by criminals or terrorists to examine the physical plant for vulnerabilities.²⁵

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 amends s. 119.071, F.S., to exempt the building plans, blueprints, schematic drawings, and diagrams, including draft, preliminary, and final formats, which depict the internal layout or structural elements of a health care facility. The bill defines "health care facility" as a hospital, ambulatory surgical center, nursing home, hospice, or intermediate care facility for the developmentally disabled. This exemption currently exists for an attraction and recreation facility, entertainment or resort complex, industrial complex, retail and services development, office development, and hotel and motel development.

The bill also states that s. 119.071(3)(c), F.S., is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and establishes an automatic repeal date of October 2, 2023, unless saved from repeal by the Legislature.

Section 2 of the bill provides the public necessity statement that is required for all new public records exemptions by art. I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution. The bill provides that, because the

²³ Section 119.15(7), F.S.

²⁴ AHCA, Office of Plans and Construction <http://ahca.myflorida.com/MCHQ/Plans/>, (last visited Jan. 10, 2018).

²⁵ AHCA, *HB 551 Analysis* (Nov. 28, 2017) (on file with the Senate Committee on Health Policy).

plans and blueprints of health care facilities are held by the AHCA, they are subject to public records laws and may be obtained by criminals and terrorists that wish to exploit any vulnerabilities in the health care facilities' physical plants. These documents should remain confidential to ensure the safety of the health care facility's staff, patients, and visitors. The bill states that it is a public necessity to keep these records confidential in order to prevent possible terrorist or criminal actions and to reduce these facilities' exposure to security threats.

Section 3 provides that the bill takes effect upon becoming law.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

Voting Requirement

Article I, Section 24(c) of the Florida Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of each chamber for public records exemptions to pass.

Public Necessity Statement

Article I, Section 24(c) of the Florida Constitution requires a public necessity statement for a newly created or expanded public-records exemption. The Florida Constitution provides that an exemption must state with specificity the public necessity of the exemption. The public necessity statement provides that the exemption is needed to protect the safety of the health care facility's staff, patients, and visitors and to prevent possible terrorist or criminal actions and to reduce these facilities' exposure to security threats against health care facilities.

Breadth of Exemption

Article I, Section 24(c) of the Florida Constitution requires a newly created public records exemption to be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law. The bill exempts only building plans, blueprints, schematic drawings, and diagrams, including draft, preliminary, and final formats, which depict the internal layout or structural elements of a health care facility. This bill appears to be no broader than necessary to accomplish the public necessity for this public records exemption.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 119.071 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.