

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 Governmental Oversight and Accountability

BILL: CS/SB 1306

INTRODUCER: Health Policy Committee and Senator Grimsley

SUBJECT: Public Records and Meetings/Nurse Licensure Compact

DATE: February 22, 2016

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Lloyd	Stovall	HP	Fav/CS
2.	Kim	McVaney	GO	Favorable
3.			RC	

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 1306 exempts from public record inspection and copying requirements personal identifying information of a nurse, other than the nurse's name, licensure status, or licensure number, obtained from the coordinated licensure information system (CLIS) under the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC or compact), as defined in s. 464.0095,¹ and held by the Department of Health (department) or the Board of Nursing (board). This information is not exempt from public records requirements if the state originally reporting the information to the CLIS authorizes disclosure of such information by law.

The bill exempts from public meeting requirements a meeting or a portion of the meeting of the Interstate Commission of Nurse Licensure Compact Administrators established under the compact. The exemption applies when matters are specifically exempted from disclosure by state or federal law are discussed. The recordings, minutes, and records generated from those meetings are also exempt from requirements to disclose such public records.

The bill takes effect on the same date that SB 1316 or similar legislation takes effect. SB 1316, the substantive bill authorizing Florida's participation in the compact, is effective on December 31, 2018, or upon enactment of the NLC into law by 26 states whichever occurs first.

¹ Section 464.0095, F.S., is created in SB 1316 and establishes the state's participation in the Nurse Licensure Compact and the coordinated licensure information system.

The bill provides for the repeal of the exemption on October 2, 2021, unless reviewed and reenacted by the Legislature. It also provides statements of public necessity for the public records and public meetings exemptions as required by the State Constitution.

Because the bill creates a new public records exemption, a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in each house of the Legislature is required for final passage.

II. Present Situation:

The Florida Constitution provides that the public has the right to access government records and meetings. The public may inspect or copy any record made or received in connection with the official business of any public body, officer, or employee received in connection with the official business of any public body, officer, or employee of the state, or of persons acting on their behalf.² The public also has a right to be afforded notice and access to meetings of any collegial public body of the executive branch of state government or of any local government.³ The Legislature's meetings must also be open and noticed to the public, unless there is an exception provided for by the Constitution.⁴

In addition to the Florida Constitution, the Florida Statutes specify conditions under which public access must be provided to government records and meetings. Chapter 119, F.S., the "Public Records Act" constitutes the main body of public records laws, and 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 the 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 A violation of the Public Records Act may result in civil or criminal liability.⁷

² FLA. CONST. art. 1, s. 24(a).

³ FLA. CONST. art. 1, s. 24(b).

⁴ FLA. CONST. art. 1, s. 24(b).

⁵ Chapter 119, 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 their 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 purpose 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." The Public Records Act does not apply to legislative or judicial records. *Locke v. Hawkes*, 595 So. 2d 32 (Fla. 1992). The Legislature's records are public pursuant to s. 11.0431, F.S.

⁷ Section 119.10, F.S. Public records laws are found throughout the Florida Statutes, as are penalties for violations of those laws.

Section 286.011, F.S., the “Sunshine Law,”⁸ requires all meetings of any board or commission or local agency or authority at which official acts are to be taken to be noticed and open to the public.⁹

The Legislature may, by two-thirds votes of the House and the Senate¹⁰ create an exemption to public records or open meetings requirements.¹¹ An exemption must explicitly state the public necessity of the exemption¹² and must be tailored to accomplish the stated purpose of the law.¹³ A statutory exemption which does not meet these two criteria may be found unconstitutional, and efforts may not be made by the court to preserve the exemption.¹⁴

Open Government Sunset Review Act

In addition to the constitutional requirements relating to the enactment of a public records exemption, the Legislature may subject the new or broadened exemption to the Open Government Sunset Review Act (OGSR).

The OGSR prescribes a legislative review process for newly created or substantially amended public records.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 In practice, many exemptions are continued by repealing the sunset date rather than reenacting the exemption.

⁸ *Board of Public Instruction of Broward County v. Doran*, 224 So. 2d 693, 695 (Fla. 1969).

⁹ Section 286.011(1)-(2), F.S. The Sunshine Law does not apply to the Legislature; rather, open meetings requirements for the Legislature are set out in the Florida Constitution. Article III, s. 4(e) of the Florida Constitution provides the legislative committee meetings must be open and noticed to the public. In addition, prearranged gatherings, between more than two members of the Legislature, or between the Governor, the President of the Senate, or the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the purpose of which is to agree upon or to take formal legislative action, must be reasonable open to the public.

¹⁰ FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(c).

¹¹ FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(c). There is a difference between records the Legislature designates as exempt from public records requirements and those the Legislature designates as *confidential* and exempt. A record classified as exempt from public disclosure may be disclosed under certain circumstances. *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So.2d 687 (Fla. 5th DCA 1991). 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).

¹² FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(c).

¹³ FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(c).

¹⁴ *Halifax Hosp. Medical Center v. News-Journal Corp.*, 724 So.2d 567 (Fla. 1999). In *Halifax Hospital*, the Florida Supreme Court found that a public meetings exemption was unconstitutional because the statement of public necessity did not define important terms and did not justify the breadth of the exemption. In *Baker County Press, Inc. v. Baker County Medical Services, Inc.*, 870 So. 2d 189 (Fla. 1st DCA 2004), the court found that the intent of a statute was to create a public records exemption. The *Baker County Press* court found that since the law did not contain a public necessity statement, it was unconstitutional.

¹⁵ Section 119.15, F.S. According to s. 119.15(4)(b), F.S., a substantially amended exemption is one that 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. The OGSR process is currently being followed; however, the Legislature is not required to continue to do so. The Florida Supreme Court has found that one Legislature cannot bind a future Legislature. *Scott v. Williams*, 107 So. 3d 379 (Fla. 2013).

¹⁶ Section 119.15(3), F.S.

Under the OGSR the purpose and necessity of reenacting the exemption are reviewed. The Legislature must consider the following questions during its review of an exemption:¹⁷

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

If the Legislature expands an exemption, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are required.¹⁸ If the exemption is reenacted without substantive changes or if the exemption is narrowed, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote 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.¹⁹

Practitioner Profiles

Pursuant to s. 456.041, F.S., the department operates a database of Florida's healthcare practitioners, which includes nurses. The practitioner profile database is online and searchable.²⁰ The profile may include information that is public record and relates to the practitioner's profession.²¹ Practitioners and the department are required to update profiles.²² Information exempt from public disclosure and submitted by another governmental entity that the department uses for practitioner profiles continues to maintain its exempt status.²³

Nurse Licensure Compact

The Nurse Licensure Compact bill, SB 1316, authorizes Florida to enter the revised Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC or compact), a multi-state agreement that establishes a mutual recognition system for the licensure of registered nurses and licensed practical or vocational nurses. A nurse who is issued a multi-state license from a state that is a party to the NLC would be permitted to practice in any state that is also a party to the compact. A nurse with a multistate license privilege must comply with the practice laws of the state in which he or she is practicing or where the patient is located. A party state may continue to issue a single-state license, authorizing practice only in that state.

¹⁷ Section 119.15(6)(a), F.S.

¹⁸ FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(c).

¹⁹ Section 119.15(7), F.S.

²⁰ Section 456.041(8), F.S. Department of Health Practitioner Profile Search, <https://appsmqa.doh.state.fl.us/MQASearchServices/HealthCareProviders/PractitionerProfileSearch> (last visited February 18, 2016).

²¹ Section 456.041(7), F.S.

²² Section 456.042, F.S.

²³ Section 456.046, F.S.

The NLC permits a state to take adverse action against the multistate licensure privilege of any nurse practicing in that state. The home state has the exclusive authority to take adverse action against the home state license, including revocation and suspension. The NLC requires all participating states to report to the CLIS, all adverse actions taken against a nurse's license or multistate licensure practice privilege, any current significant investigative information, and denials of information.

All party states may access the CLIS to see licensure and disciplinary information for nurses licensed in the party states. The CLIS includes nurse's personal identifying information, licensure classification information and statuses, public emergency and final disciplinary action information, and status information about multistate licensure privileges from all party states. A party state may designate the information it contributes to the CLIS as confidential, prohibiting its disclosure to nonparty states. State licensing boards must report disciplinary information, significant investigative information, and denials of applications to the CLIS promptly.

The NLC establishes the Interstate Commission of Nurse Licensure Compact Administrators (commission) to oversee the operation of the NLC. The head of each state's licensing board or his or her designee must serve as the state's delegate to the commission. The NLC grants the commission authority to promulgate uniform rules relating to the implementation and administration of NLC. The commission may also take action against a party state if a party state fails to meet its obligations under the NLC, including termination of membership after exhausting all other means of compliance.

All commission meetings are open to the public and must be publicly noticed. Both commission meetings and hearings for proposed rules must be noticed at least 60 days prior to each meeting on the commission's website and on the website of each party state's licensing board or published in the publication in which each state would otherwise post proposed rules. The compact also provides for public comment opportunities through both oral and written testimony. Closed meetings are permitted if the commission is discussing:

- A party state's noncompliance with its obligations under the compact;
- The employment, compensation, discipline, or other personnel matters, practices, or procedures related to specific employees or other matters related to the Commission's internal personnel practices and procedure;
- Current, threatened, or reasonably anticipated litigation;
- Contract negotiations for the purchase or sale of goods, services, or real estate;
- Accusing a person of a crime or formally censuring a person;
- Disclosure of trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential;
- Disclosure of information of a personal nature where disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
- Disclosure of investigatory records compiled for law enforcement purposes;
- Disclosure of information related to any reports prepared by or on behalf of the commission for the purpose of investigating compliance with the NLC; or
- Matters specifically exempted from disclosure by federal or state law.

The commission must keep comprehensive minutes of matters discussed in its meetings and provide a full and accurate summary of actions taken, and the reasons. Minutes of a closed meeting will be sealed; however, such minutes may be released pursuant to a majority vote of the commission or an order of a court of competent jurisdiction.

The compact is effective on December 31, 2018, or upon enactment of the NLC into law by 26 states whichever occurs first.²⁴

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 creates s. 464.0096, F.S., to make a nurse's personal identifying information, other than the nurse's name, licensure status, or licensure number, obtained from the coordinated licensure information system, as defined in s. 464.0095, F.S., and held by the department or board exempt from public disclosure under s. 119.07(1), F.S., and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution. The personal identifying information is exempt from public disclosure unless the state that originally reported the information to the coordinated licensure information system authorizes the disclosure of such information. Under such circumstances, the information may only be disclosed to the extent permitted by the reporting state's law.

The bill also creates an exemption from s. 286.011, F.S., and s. 24(b), Art. I of the State Constitution for a meeting or any portion of a meeting of the commission during which any matters specifically exempted from disclosure by federal or state statute are discussed.

Recordings, minutes, and records generated during an exempt meeting are exempt from s. 119.07(1), F.S., and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

These exemptions are subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and will stand repealed on October 2, 2021, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

Section 2 provides, as required by the State Constitution, a statement of public necessity which states that protection of the specified information is required under the NLC which the state must adopt in order to become a party state to the compact. Without the public records exemption, the state would be unable to effectively and efficiently implement and administer the compact.

Additionally, the bill provides a statement of public necessity, as required by the State Constitution, for protecting any meeting or portion of a meeting of the commission at which matters specifically exempted from disclosure by federal or state statute are discussed. These meetings or portions of meetings would be exempted from s. 286.011, F.S., and s. 24(b), Art. I. of the Florida Constitution.

Without the public meeting exemption, the state will be prohibited from becoming a party to the compact. Thus, the state will be unable to effectively and efficiently administer the compact.

²⁴ Twenty-five states have enacted the original Nurse Licensure Compact.

The bill includes a statement of public necessity by the Legislature that the recordings, minutes, and records generated during an exempt meeting of the commission is exempt pursuant to s. 464.0096, F.S., and exempt from s. 119.07(1), F.S., and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution. Release of such information would negate the public meeting exemption.

Section 3 provides that the act shall take effect on the same date as SB 1316 or similar legislation takes effect, if such legislation is adopted in the same legislative session or an extension thereof and becomes law.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

Public Records

SB 1316 provides that any contributing party state may designate information which cannot be disclosed without the express consent of the contributing state. A public records exemption for this information is not included in this bill, but may need to be considered.

SB 1306 provides that personal identifying information obtained from a nurse's home state may only be disclosed to the extent permitted by the home state's laws.

Public Meetings

Under the compact, SB 1316 provides that commission meetings must be open to the public, and such meetings, including rulemaking hearings, must be publicly noticed 60 days prior to each meeting. Proposed rules must be posted to the commission's website and to the party state's licensing board websites or the publication in which each party state would otherwise publish proposed rules. The public must also be provided a reasonable opportunity for public comment, orally or in writing, for proposed rules.

However, under SB 1316, the compact permits the commission to meet in closed, nonpublic meetings under these circumstances:

- A party state's noncompliance with its obligations under the compact;
- The employment, compensation, discipline, or other personnel matters, practices, or procedures related to specific employees or other matters related to the Commission's internal personnel practices and procedure;
- Current, threatened, or reasonably anticipated litigation;
- Contract negotiations for the purchase or sale of goods, services, or real estate;
- Accusing a person of a crime or formally censuring a person;
- Disclosure of trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential;

- Disclosure of information of a personal nature where disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
- Disclosure of investigatory records compiled for law enforcement purposes;
- Disclosure of information related to any reports prepared by or on behalf of the commission for the purpose of investigating compliance with the NLC; or
- Matters specifically exempted from disclosure by federal or state law.

CS/SB 1306 simplifies this list to the last bullet: matters specifically exempted from disclosure by state or federal statute. Typically, a public meetings bill specifically states what subjects are or are not subject to closing a meeting.

The commission is required to keep minutes of these closed sessions that fully describe all matters discussed and provide an accurate summary of actions taken. All minutes and documents of a closed meeting shall remain under seal according to the compact's provisions, subject to release by a majority vote of the commission or order of a court of competent jurisdiction.

Vote Requirement

Article I, Section 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 or public meeting exemption. This bill creates a public records exemption for information obtained from the coordinated licensure information system, and held by the department or the board, thus it requires a two-thirds vote.

Public Necessity Statement

Article I, Section 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a public necessity statement for a newly created or expanded public records or public meeting exemption. This bill creates a new public records exemption and includes a public necessity statement that supports the exemption. The exemption is no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose.

Breadth of the Exemption

It is not clear if the public records exemption is broader than necessary to accomplish the purposes outlined in the public necessity statement. The exemption covers personal identifying information (excluding a nurse's name, licensure status and license number) that is otherwise exempt in the nurse's home state. In the context of the compact, it is not clear what information would be considered "personal identifying information" for purposes of this exemption. Personal identifying information is used throughout Florida statutes, but it may have a different meaning in other states. For example, it is not clear if a state would consider a nurse's business address, certifications, or level of education to be personal identifying information. State laws are also subject to change, so it is not clear if this exemption is limited to state laws as currently enacted or in the future. Therefore, the breadth of the exemption is subject to change depending on when or how the department or the board interprets the laws of the nurse's home state.

It is also unclear if the public meetings exemption is broader than necessary to accomplish the purposes outlined in the public necessity statement. SB 1316 provides instances during which a public meeting may be closed. Some of those matters are already exempted under Florida's public meetings exemptions.²⁵ In addition, SB 1306 provides that the commission has the authority to vote on when it will close a meeting, so it is not clear exactly which meetings or portions of meetings will be closed. It is unclear if giving the commission the authority to vote on when it will close its meetings would be considered an overly broad exemption. Finally, one reason the commission may close a meeting is to protect someone's personal privacy. This may conflict with Article 1, section 23, of the Florida Constitution which provides:

Every natural person has the right to be let alone and free from governmental intrusion into the person's private life except as otherwise provided herein. This section shall not be construed to limit the public's right of access to public records and meetings as provided by law.

Courts will look to the Legislature to balance these competing interests.²⁶

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The department reports no impact for CS/SB 1306.

²⁵ Meetings with attorneys on pending litigation are exempt under s. 286.011(8), F.S. Competitive solicitations team meetings and some negotiations are exempt under s. 286.0113(2), F.S. Meetings to determine if there is probable cause to find that a practitioner is subject to discipline are closed until 10 days after probable cause has been found pursuant to s. 456.073(4), F.S. These exemptions are provided as examples and not an exhaustive list of relevant public meetings exemptions.

²⁶ See *Campus Communications, Inc. v. Earnhardt*, 821 So. 2d 388, 402-403 (Fla. 5th DCA 2002) ("Thus our function here has not been to weigh these two constitutional rights with respect to autopsy photographs and determine whether the right that helps ensure an open government freely accessible by every citizen is more significant or profound than the right that preserves individual liberty and privacy. Rather, our function has been to determine whether the Legislature has declared that the latter prevails over the former in a manner that is consistent with the constitutional provisions that bestow upon it the power to do so."); see also *Wallace v. Guzman*, 687 So. 2d 1351, 1354 (Fla. 3d DCA 1997) (noting "[t]he [L]egislature has balanced the private/public rights by creating the various exemptions from public disclosure contained in section 119.07, Florida Statutes (1995).").

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

The exemption for records generated during a meeting does not specify that the records are held by the department, board or commission.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill creates section 464.0096 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Health Policy on February 16, 2016

The CS narrows the types of personal identifying information obtained from the coordinated licensure system and held by the department that will be exempt from s. 119.07(1), F.S., and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution. A nurse's name, licensure status, and licensure number will not be exempt. Additional information may be made public if the state that originally reported the information authorizes the disclosure of such information by law.

The CS provides that a meeting or a portion of a meeting of commission is specifically exempt from s. 286.011, F.S., and s. 24(b), Art. I of the State Constitution at which matters specifically exempted from disclosure under federal or state statute are discussed. The bill no longer lists specific topics of discussion that are exempt.

The CS modifies both the public records and the meeting exemptions throughout the bill to reflect that such exemptions are only exempt, and are not 'confidential and exempt.'

A cross reference to the substantive bill, SB 1316, is added to the effective date.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.