

**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.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

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BILL: SB 1042  
INTRODUCER: Senator Brodeur  
SUBJECT: Public Records/Registry of Persons with Special Needs  
DATE: February 7, 2022      REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Delia	Cox	CF	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.			AHS	
3.			AP	

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**I. Summary:**

SB 1042 creates an exemption from the public records requirements of s. 119.07(1), F.S., and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution for the following information relating to the enrollment of individuals on the Registry of Persons with Special Needs (RPSN) created by SB 1040:

- Records;
- Data;
- Information;
- Correspondence; and
- Communications.

The bill also applies the exemption to any locally maintained registry that is substantially similar to the RPSN. The bill specifies that such information may not be disclosed except, upon request, to:

- A law enforcement agency;
- A county emergency management agency;
- A local fire department; or
- As otherwise specifically authorized by the bill.

The bill provides for an Open Government Sunset review and contains a statement of public necessity as required by the State Constitution.

The bill also applies the exemption retroactively to confidential and exempt information held by one of the agency entities listed above before the effective date of the act.

The bill is not expected to have a fiscal impact. See Section V. Fiscal Impact Statement.

The bill provides that the act shall take effect on the same date that an unidentified bill or similar legislation takes effect, if such legislation is adopted in the same legislative session or an extension thereof and becomes law. SB 1040 has an effective date of July 1, 2022.

## II. Present Situation:

### Access to Public Records - Generally

The Florida Constitution provides that the public has the right to inspect or copy records made or received in connection with official governmental business.<sup>1</sup> The right to inspect or copy 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.<sup>2</sup>

Additional requirements and exemptions related to public records are found in various statutes and rules, depending on the branch of government involved. For instance, section 11.0431, F.S., provides public access requirements for legislative records. Relevant exemptions are codified in s. 11.0431(2)-(3), F.S., and adopted in the rules of each house of the legislature.<sup>3</sup> Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.420 governs public access to judicial branch records.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, chapter 119, F.S., known as the Public Records Act, provides requirements for public records held by executive agencies.

### Executive Agency Records – The Public Records Act

The Public Records Act provides that all state, county and municipal records are open for personal inspection and copying by any person, and that providing access to public records is a duty of each agency.<sup>5</sup>

Section 119.011(12), F.S., defines “public records” to include:

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 connections with the transaction of official business by any agency.

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<sup>1</sup> FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(a).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> See Rule 1.48, *Rules and Manual of the Florida Senate*, (2018-2020) and Rule 14.1, *Rules of the Florida House of Representatives*, Edition 2, (2018-2020)

<sup>4</sup> *State v. Wooten*, 260 So. 3d 1060 (Fla. 4<sup>th</sup> DCA 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Section 119.01(1), F.S. Section 119.011(2), F.S., defines “agency” 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.”

The Florida Supreme Court has interpreted this definition to encompass all materials made or received by an agency in connection with official business that are used to “perpetuate, communicate, or formalize knowledge of some type.”<sup>6</sup>

The Florida Statutes specify conditions under which public access to public records must be provided. The Public Records Act guarantees every person’s right to inspect and copy any public record at any reasonable time, under reasonable conditions, and under supervision by the custodian of the public record.<sup>7</sup> A violation of the Public Records Act may result in civil or criminal liability.<sup>8</sup>

The Legislature may exempt public records from public access requirements by passing a general law by a two-thirds vote of both the House and the Senate.<sup>9</sup> The exemption must state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption and must be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the exemption.<sup>10</sup>

General exemptions from the public records requirements are contained in the Public Records Act.<sup>11</sup> Specific exemptions often are placed in the substantive statutes relating to a particular agency or program.<sup>12</sup>

When creating a public records exemption, the Legislature may provide that a record is “exempt” or “confidential and exempt.” There is a difference between records the Legislature has determined to be exempt from the Public Records Act and those which the Legislature has determined to be exempt from the Public Records Act *and confidential*.<sup>13</sup> Records designated as “confidential and exempt” are not subject to inspection by the public and may only be released under the circumstances defined by statute.<sup>14</sup> Records designated as “exempt” may be released at the discretion of the records custodian under certain circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Shevin v. Byron, Harless, Schaffer, Reid and Assoc., Inc.*, 379 So. 2d 633, 640 (Fla. 1980).

<sup>7</sup> Section 119.07(1)(a), F.S.

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

<sup>9</sup> FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(c).

<sup>10</sup> *Id. See, e.g., Halifax Hosp. Medical Center v. News-Journal Corp.*, 724 So. 2d 567 (Fla. 1999) (holding 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); *Baker County Press, Inc. v. Baker County Medical Services, Inc.*, 870 So. 2d 189 (Fla. 1st DCA 2004) (holding that a statutory provision written to bring another party within an existing public records exemption is unconstitutional without a public necessity statement).

<sup>11</sup> *See, e.g., s. 119.071(1)(a), F.S.* (exempting from public disclosure examination questions and answer sheets of examinations administered by a governmental agency for the purpose of licensure).

<sup>12</sup> *See, e.g., s. 213.053(2)(a), F.S.* (exempting from public disclosure information contained in tax returns received by the Department of Revenue).

<sup>13</sup> *WFTV, Inc. v. The Sch. Bd. of Seminole County*, 874 So. 2d 48, 53 (Fla. 5<sup>th</sup> DCA 2004).

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So. 2d 683 (Fla. 5<sup>th</sup> DCA 1991).

## Open Government Sunset Review Act

The provisions of s. 119.15, F.S., known as the Open Government Sunset Review Act<sup>16</sup> (the Act), prescribe a legislative review process for newly created or substantially amended<sup>17</sup> public records or open meetings exemptions, with specified exceptions.<sup>18</sup> The Act requires the repeal of such exemption on October 2nd of the fifth year after creation or substantial amendment, unless the Legislature reenacts the exemption.<sup>19</sup>

The Act 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.<sup>20</sup> 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 subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, and administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption;<sup>21</sup>
- It protects sensitive, personal information, the release of which would be defamatory, cause unwarranted damage to the good name or reputation of the individual, or would jeopardize the individual's safety. If this public purpose is cited as the basis of an exemption, however, only personal identifying information is exempt;<sup>22</sup> or
- It protects information of a confidential nature concerning entities, such as trade or business secrets.<sup>23</sup>

The Act also requires specified questions to be considered during the review process.<sup>24</sup> In examining an exemption, the Act directs the Legislature to question the purpose and necessity of reenacting the exemption.

If the exemption is continued and expanded, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are required.<sup>25</sup> If the exemption is continued without substantive changes or if the exemption is continued and narrowed, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote

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<sup>16</sup> Section 119.15, F.S.

<sup>17</sup> An exemption is considered to be substantially amended if it is expanded to include more records or information or to include meetings as well as records. Section 119.15(4)(b), F.S.

<sup>18</sup> Section 119.15(2)(a) and (b), F.S., provides that exemptions required by federal law or applicable solely to the Legislature or the State Court System are not subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act.

<sup>19</sup> Section 119.15(3), F.S.

<sup>20</sup> Section 119.15(6)(b), F.S.

<sup>21</sup> Section 119.15(6)(b)1., F.S.

<sup>22</sup> Section 119.15(6)(b)2., F.S.

<sup>23</sup> Section 119.15(6)(b)3., F.S.

<sup>24</sup> Section 119.15(6)(a), F.S. The specified questions are:

- 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?

<sup>25</sup> See generally s. 119.15, F.S.

for passage are *not* required. If the Legislature allows an exemption to expire, the previously exempt records will remain exempt unless otherwise provided by law.<sup>26</sup>

### **Developmental Disabilities**

The APD serves more than 58,000 Floridians with developmental disabilities including autism, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, intellectual disabilities, Down syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, and Phelan-McDermid syndrome.<sup>27</sup>

### ***Autism***

Autism is a pervasive, neurologically-based developmental disability of extended duration that has onset during infancy or childhood, which causes severe learning, communication, and behavioral disorders.<sup>28</sup> Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) includes autism, Asperger's syndrome, and any other pervasive developmental disorder.<sup>29</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that approximately one in 44 children has ASD.<sup>30</sup> The CDC also estimates that over 5.4 million adults have ASD.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Interactions with Law Enforcement for Individuals with Autism***

A person's developmental disability may make interactions with law enforcement more challenging. For example, identifying a person with an ASD can be confusing to any person unfamiliar with the condition, including law enforcement. Law enforcement can mistake the signs of autism with behaviors typically associated with those of criminals.<sup>32</sup> Common attributes of autism are communication differences and behaviors or thinking that are repetitive or restricted to an area of interest. These traits could be interpreted by law enforcement as not being compliant with questioning or direct instructions. A characteristic of ASD known as escalation poses a particular problem in encounters with law enforcement.<sup>33</sup> Escalation describes the response of a person with ASD under stress or in an unfamiliar situation.<sup>34</sup> Overwhelmed by the barrage of sensory information, a person with ASD may attempt to flee the uncomfortable situation, become combative, or simply shut down.<sup>35</sup> The individual may cover his or her ears and shriek, not knowing how or where to get help.<sup>36</sup> The presence of police lights and sirens,

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<sup>26</sup> Section 119.15(7), F.S.

<sup>27</sup> Agency for Persons with Disabilities, *Long-Range Program Plan (2021)*, available at <http://floridafiscalportal.state.fl.us/Document.aspx?ID=23172&DocType=PDF> (last visited February 3, 2022).

<sup>28</sup> Section 393.063(5), F.S.

<sup>29</sup> Section 627.6686(2)(b), F.S.

<sup>30</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (The CDC), *Data & Statistics on Autism Spectrum Disorder*, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html> (last visited February 3, 2022).

<sup>31</sup> The CDC, *Key Findings: CDC Releases First Estimates of the Number of Adults Living with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the United States*, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/features/adults-living-with-autism-spectrum-disorder.html> (last visited February 3, 2022).

<sup>32</sup> Randy Lambert "How Changing the Wes Kleinert Fair Interview Act and Establishing Law Enforcement Academy Training Standards Will Help the Autism Community," *Child and Family Law Journal*, p. 48 (2018), available at <https://lawpublications.barry.edu/cflj/vol6/iss1/3> (last visited February 3, 2022).

<sup>33</sup> Bernard J. Farber, *Police Interaction With Autistic Persons: The Need For Training*, *AeL Monthly Law Journal*, p. 106 (2009), available at <https://www.aele.org/law/2009all07/2009-07MLJ101.pdf> (last visited February 3, 2022).

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

uniforms, loud and unfamiliar voices, or barking dogs often makes a difficult situation worse by contributing to the individual's sensory overload.<sup>37</sup>

### **Alzheimer's Disease**

Alzheimer's disease is a form of dementia, a general term for memory loss. It is a progressive brain disorder that damages and eventually destroys brain cells, leading to memory loss and changes in the functions of the brain. In the early stages of Alzheimer's disease, memory loss is mild; in late-stages, individuals lose the ability to carry on a conversation and respond to their environment. Currently, the disease has no cure, but treatment can temporarily slow the worsening of symptoms.<sup>38</sup>

Florida has an increasing number of individuals with Alzheimer's disease. An estimated 580,000 Floridians have Alzheimer's disease.<sup>39</sup> The projected number of Floridians with Alzheimer's disease is estimated to increase by 24% to 720,000 individuals by 2025.<sup>40</sup>

### ***Interactions with Law Enforcement for Individuals with Alzheimer's and Dementia***

Many behaviors associated with Alzheimer's disease and dementia tend to increase a person's chance of interacting with law enforcement. Because these individuals are often unable to explain their unusual behavior, their actions are more easily misunderstood.<sup>41</sup> Common instances that can cause someone with Alzheimer's disease to interact with law enforcement include wandering, auto accidents, erratic driving, accidental breaking and entering due to confusion, and unintentional shoplifting.<sup>42</sup>

### **Voluntary Registry Systems**

Law enforcement agencies nationwide have begun utilizing voluntary registry systems that provide officers with relevant information on individuals with special needs, including those with Alzheimer's disease.<sup>43</sup> Law enforcement agencies have found that such registries can:

- Promote community safety;
- Improve officer safety;
- Increase the speed and efficiency in which officers are able to respond, decreasing department liability;
- Reduce strain on department resources (human and financial) during emergencies;
- Give community members peace of mind; and

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<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

<sup>38</sup> Alzheimer's Association, *2021 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures*, available at <https://www.alz.org/media/documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf> (last visited February 3, 2022).

<sup>39</sup> The Department of Elder Affairs, *2021 Alzheimer's Disease Advisory Committee Annual Report*, p. 4, available at [https://elderaffairs.org/wp-content/uploads/ADAC-Report-2021\\_FINAL.pdf](https://elderaffairs.org/wp-content/uploads/ADAC-Report-2021_FINAL.pdf) (last visited February 3, 2022).

<sup>40</sup> *Id.*

<sup>41</sup> Alzheimer's Association, *Alzheimer's Disease Guide for Law Enforcement*, available at [https://www.alz.org/national/documents/safereturn\\_lawenforcement.pdf](https://www.alz.org/national/documents/safereturn_lawenforcement.pdf) (last visited February 3, 2022).

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*

<sup>43</sup> The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), *A Guide to Law Enforcement on Voluntary Registry Programs for Vulnerable Populations*, p. 2, available at [https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/Alz%20Voluntary%20Registry\\_0.pdf](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/Alz%20Voluntary%20Registry_0.pdf) (last visited February 3, 2022) (hereinafter cited as "The IACP Guide").

- Promote community partnerships in responding to special needs community members.<sup>44</sup>

Voluntary registry systems allow law enforcement to obtain information that assists in response to calls for service involving individuals with conditions such as Alzheimer's disease.<sup>45</sup>

Voluntary registry systems have also proven helpful in responding to individuals in other special needs populations. Departments utilize the system for community members living with ASD, developmental disabilities, attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), epilepsy, brain injury, mental illness, and other disabilities that may affect the way individuals interact and respond to law enforcement officers and other first responders.<sup>46</sup>

### ***Confidentiality of Information***

Voluntary registry systems generally contain large amounts of personal and sensitive information. Confidentiality concerns, coupled with a general fear of law enforcement prevalent in some communities, could hinder community willingness to participate in voluntary registry programs.<sup>47</sup> Some community members may be hesitant to participate due to fear exploitation of registry data.<sup>48</sup> Others fear that registry information collected may be used to violate the rights of special needs individuals by inappropriately releasing the information to outside parties and entities.<sup>49</sup>

Some agencies utilizing voluntary registry systems use disclaimers, waivers, or releases on voluntary registry systems' registration forms or questionnaires to notify registrants that providing data is voluntary and to ensure that registrants and their caregivers know that information will be used solely for the purpose of assisting first responders in providing service.<sup>50</sup> Other individuals have also expressed concerns regarding Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliance of registry information collection and storage.<sup>51</sup>

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

The bill amends the proposed s. 402.88, F.S., which would be created by SB 1040. The bill creates an exemption from the public records requirements of s. 119.07(1), F.S., and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution for the following information relating to the enrollment of individuals on the Registry of Persons with Special Needs (RPSN) created by SB 1040:

- Records;
- Data;
- Information;
- Correspondence; and
- Communications.

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<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> *Id.*

<sup>46</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>47</sup> The IACP Guide at 21.

<sup>48</sup> *Id.*

<sup>49</sup> *Id.*

<sup>50</sup> *Id.*

<sup>51</sup> *Id.*

The bill also applies the exemption to any locally maintained registry that is substantially similar to the RPSN. The bill specifies that such information may not be disclosed except, upon request, to:

- A law enforcement agency;
- A county emergency management agency;
- A local fire department.

Any of the above-listed agency entities are permitted to disclose information otherwise deemed confidential and exempt by the bill to others not specifically listed only under the following circumstances:

- With the express written consent of the registry enrollee or the legally authorized representative of such enrollee;
- In a medical emergency;
- By court order upon a finding of good cause;
- To another governmental agency when needed for the performance of its duties and responsibilities; or
- In the interest of public safety, to;
  - Assist in locating the enrollee; or
  - Promote the safety or well-being of the enrollee, as determined by the law enforcement agency.

The bill includes a public necessity statement, specifying the need to make all records, data, information, correspondence, and communications relating the enrollment of persons in the RPSN confidential and exempt from Florida's public records laws. The bill provides that such records are likely to include confidential medical information and sensitive personal information of individuals on the RPSN. The bill states that the potential disclosure of such information will deter enrollment, thereby depriving law enforcement of information which would enable them to interact with those eligible for enrollment in safe and appropriate ways.

The bill is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and will stand repealed on October 2, 2027, unless reviewed and saved from repeal by the Legislature.

The bill also applies the exemption retroactively to confidential and exempt information held by one of the agency entities listed above before the effective date of the act.

The bill provides that the act shall take effect on the same date that an unspecified bill or similar legislation takes effect, if such legislation is adopted in the same legislative session or an extension thereof and becomes law. SB 1040 has an effective date of July 1, 2022.

#### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

##### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

The bill does not appear to require cities and counties to expend funds or limit their authority to raise revenue or receive state-shared revenues as specified by Article VII, Section 18 of the Florida Constitution.



**B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:****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 bill creating or expanding an exemption to the public records requirements. This bill enacts a new exemption for records, data, information, correspondence, and communication relating to the enrollment of individuals on the RPSN. Thus, the bill requires a two-thirds vote to be enacted.

**Public Necessity Statement**

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a bill creating or expanding an exemption to the public records requirements to state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption. Section 2 of the bill contains a statement of public necessity for the exemption.

**Breadth of Exemption**

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires an exemption to the public records requirements to be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law. The purpose of the law is to protect sensitive personal information, and confidential medical information, of individuals enrolled in the RPSN. This bill exempts only such information from the public records requirements. The exemption does not appear to be broader than necessary to accomplish the purpose of the law.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None.

**E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

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:**

The bill does not appear to give the APD the option or ability to request information from any other agencies who have information as contemplated in SB 1040.<sup>52</sup>

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 402.88 of the Florida Statutes, if created by SB 1040.

**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.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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<sup>52</sup> The APD, *Agency Analysis of HB 735*, p. 2. (on file with the Senate Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee).