

**STORAGE NAME:** h3925.rpp  
**DATE:** February 18, 1998

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON  
REAL PROPERTY & PROBATE  
BILL RESEARCH & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT**

**BILL #:** HB 3925 (PCB 98-02)  
**RELATING TO:** Public Records Exemption  
**SPONSOR(S):** Committee on Real Property & Probate  
**COMPANION BILL(S):** SB 1180

**ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:**  
(1) REAL PROPERTY & PROBATE 4 YEAS 0 NAYS  
(2)  
(3)  
(4)  
(5)

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I. SUMMARY:

PCB 2 provides for a public records exemption for any medical, financial or mental health records necessary to evaluate the public guardianship system, to assess the need for additional public guardianship offices or services, or to develop the annual report of the Statewide Public Guardianship Office. The bill provides a statement of public necessity.

This bill is tied to PCB 1 relating to guardianship.

This bill will not have a fiscal impact.

II. SUBSTANTIVE RESEARCH:

A. PRESENT SITUATION:

Article I, s. 24, Florida Constitution, expresses Florida's public policy regarding access to government records in providing that:

(a) Every person has the right to inspect or copy any public records made or received in connection with the official business of any public body, officer, or employee of the state, or persons acting on their behalf, except with respect to records exempted pursuant to this section or specifically made confidential by this Constitution. This section specifically includes the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government and each agency or department created thereunder; counties, municipalities, and districts; and each constitutional officer, board, and commission, or entity created pursuant to law or this Constitution.

Article I, s. 24, Florida Constitution, does, however, permit the Legislature to provide by general law for the exemption of records from the requirements of s. 24. The general law exempting the records must state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption and can be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law.

Public policy regarding access to government records is also addressed in the Florida Statutes. Section 119.07, Florida Statutes, provides:

Every person who has custody of a public record shall permit the record to be inspected and examined by any person desiring to do so, at a reasonable time, under reasonable conditions, and under supervision by the custodian of the public record or the custodian's designee.

Section 119.15, Florida Statutes, provides that an exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose and may be no broader than is necessary to meet the public purpose it serves. An identifiable public purpose is served if the exemption meets one of the following purposes and the Legislature finds that the purpose is sufficiently compelling to override the strong public policy of open government and cannot be accomplished without the exemption:

1. Allows the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, which administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption;

2. Protects information of a sensitive personal nature concerning individuals, the release of which information would be defamatory to such individuals or cause unwarranted damage to the good name or reputation of such individuals or would jeopardize the safety of such individuals. However, in exemptions under this subparagraph, only information that would identify the individuals may be exempted; or

3. Protects information of a confidential nature concerning entities, including, but not limited to, a formula, pattern, device, combination of devices, or compilation of

information which is used to protect or further a business advantage over those who do not know or use it, the disclosure of which information would injure the affected entity in the marketplace.

PCB 98-01 by the Committee on Real Property & Probate creates the Statewide Public Guardianship Office. Currently each office of public guardian is administered by the chief judge of the circuit court. PCB 98-01 requires the new statewide office to conduct research including but not limited to the need for public guardianship services, and to provide oversight of the state's public guardians. In order to meet the requirements specified for this new office, the Statewide Public Guardianship Office will need access to sensitive medical, financial, and mental health records of the states' vulnerable citizens who are elderly, disabled, who have a developmental disability or who have a mental illness.

**B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:**

This bill creates an exemption from s. 119.07(1), F.S., and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution, in order to provide the executive director of the newly created Statewide Public Guardianship Office access to medical, financial, or mental health records necessary to evaluate the public guardianship system, to assess the need for additional public guardianship offices or services, or to develop the annual report as required.

**C. APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES:**

1. Less Government:

a. Does the bill create, increase or reduce, either directly or indirectly:

(1) any authority to make rules or adjudicate disputes?

N/A

(2) any new responsibilities, obligations or work for other governmental or private organizations or individuals?

N/A

(3) any entitlement to a government service or benefit?

N/A

b. If an agency or program is eliminated or reduced:

- (1) what responsibilities, costs and powers are passed on to another program, agency, level of government, or private entity?

N/A

- (2) what is the cost of such responsibility at the new level/agency?

N/A

- (3) how is the new agency accountable to the people governed?

N/A

2. Lower Taxes:

- a. Does the bill increase anyone's taxes?

N/A

- b. Does the bill require or authorize an increase in any fees?

N/A

- c. Does the bill reduce total taxes, both rates and revenues?

N/A

- d. Does the bill reduce total fees, both rates and revenues?

N/A

- e. Does the bill authorize any fee or tax increase by any local government?

N/A

3. Personal Responsibility:

- a. Does the bill reduce or eliminate an entitlement to government services or subsidy?

N/A

- b. Do the beneficiaries of the legislation directly pay any portion of the cost of implementation and operation?

N/A

4. Individual Freedom:

- a. Does the bill increase the allowable options of individuals or private organizations/associations to conduct their own affairs?

N/A

- b. Does the bill prohibit, or create new government interference with, any presently lawful activity?

N/A

5. Family Empowerment:

- a. If the bill purports to provide services to families or children:

- (1) Who evaluates the family's needs?

N/A

- (2) Who makes the decisions?

N/A

- (3) Are private alternatives permitted?

N/A

- (4) Are families required to participate in a program?

N/A

- (5) Are families penalized for not participating in a program?

N/A

- b. Does the bill directly affect the legal rights and obligations between family members?

N/A

- c. If the bill creates or changes a program providing services to families or children, in which of the following does the bill vest control of the program, either through direct participation or appointment authority:

(1) parents and guardians?

N/A

(2) service providers?

N/A

(3) government employees/agencies?

N/A

D. STATUTE(S) AFFECTED:

The bill creates section 744.7081, Florida Statutes.

E. SECTION-BY-SECTION RESEARCH:

**Section 1.** Section 744.7081, Florida Statutes, is created to permit access to records by the Statewide Public Guardianship Office. The office will have access to any medical, financial, or mental health records necessary to evaluate the public guardianship system, to assess the need for additional public guardianship offices or services, or to develop the annual report of the Statewide Public Guardianship Office.

**Section 2.** The Legislature finds that the health and safety of the public necessitates that the statewide Public Guardianship Office have access to medical, financial, and mental health records of the states' vulnerable citizens as specified.

**Section 3.** Provides for an effective date which is tied to and contingent upon the passage of PCB 98-01.

III. FISCAL RESEARCH & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE AGENCIES/STATE FUNDS:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

N/A

2. Recurring Effects:

N/A

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

N/A

4. Total Revenues and Expenditures:

N/A

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AS A WHOLE:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

N/A

2. Recurring Effects:

N/A

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

N/A

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

1. Direct Private Sector Costs:

N/A

2. Direct Private Sector Benefits:

N/A

3. Effects on Competition, Private Enterprise and Employment Markets:

N/A

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

N/A

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

This bill does not require counties or municipalities to spend funds or to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

This bill does not reduce the authority that municipalities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate.

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C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

This bill does not reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

V. COMMENTS:

N/A

VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

N/A

VII. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON REAL PROPERTY & PROBATE:

Prepared by:

Legislative Research Director:

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P.K. Jameson

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