

STORAGE NAME: h2121a.go

DATE: April 15, 1999

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
AS REVISED BY THE COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS
ANALYSIS**

BILL #: HB 2121 (PCB LT 99-03)

RELATING TO: Public Records/Nursing Home Quality-of-Care Monitoring

SPONSOR(S): Committee on Elder Affairs and Long-Term Care and Representative Argenziano

COMPANION BILL(S): HB 1971 (compare) and CS/CS/SBs 834 (compare)

ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:

(1) ELDER AFFAIRS & LONG-TERM CARE YEAS 11 NAYS 0

(2) GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS YEAS 6 NAYS 0

(3)

(4)

(5)

I. SUMMARY:

HB 2121 provides that the information contained in any agency record of a quality-of-care monitoring visit to a nursing home facility, except for specific exclusions pertaining to the reporting by a quality-of-care monitor of conditions which threaten the health or safety of a resident, is confidential and exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

HB 2121 also sets forth the public necessity for the exemption. Failure to protect the confidentiality of information gathered by the quality-of-care monitors would lead to a reluctance on the part of residents and staff of nursing facilities and others to provide accurate information which may serve as a basis for identifying and improving quality-of-care concerns before they develop into health or safety violations.

II. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:

A. PRESENT SITUATION:

Public Records Law

Article I, section 24(a), Florida Constitution, expresses Florida's public policy regarding access to government records. This section provides that:

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, section 24, Florida Constitution, also provides that the Legislature may, by general law, exempt public records from the requirements of section 24(a). Such a general law exempting records from public disclosure 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, F.S., 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, F.S., the Open Government Sunset Review Act of 1995, states that an exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose and may be no broader than necessary to meet that public purpose. 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 that such purpose 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.

Nursing Home Quality-of-Care Monitors

The substantive bill, HB 1971, establishes a program of quality-of-care monitoring which requires the Agency for Health Care Administration to dedicate at least one specially trained registered nurse in every agency district, functioning solely and independently, to monitor all nursing facilities in the district on a regular, unannounced, aperiodic basis, including nights, evenings, weekends, and holidays. In addition to observation of resident care and services, the monitors will conduct formal and informal interviews with residents, family members, guardians, staff, resident guests, volunteers, other regulatory staff, and representatives of a long term care ombudsman council or a human rights advocacy committee. The quality-of-care monitor may recommend to the facility administrator

procedural and policy changes and staff training, as needed, to improve the care or quality of life of facility residents.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

This bill provides that the information contained in any agency record of a quality-of-care monitoring visit to a nursing home facility, except for specific exclusions pertaining to the reporting by a quality-of-care monitor of conditions which threaten the health or safety of a resident, is confidential and exempt from s. 119.07(1), F.S., and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

The effective date of this bill is tied to the enactment of HB 1971 or similar legislation creating s. 400.118, F.S., relating to nursing home quality-of-care monitors.

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?

Yes. Individuals would not have access to certain public records.

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

The bill does not reduce or eliminate an agency or a program.

(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?

Yes. Individuals would not have access to certain public records.

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

No.

4. Individual Freedom:

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

Yes. By exempting certain information held by ACHA collected by nursing home quality-of-care monitors from public records laws, more individuals will voluntarily participate in the formal and informal interviews conducted in order to accurately monitor the conditions at nursing homes.

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

Yes. Individuals would not have access to certain public records.

5. Family Empowerment:

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

The bill does not purport to provide services to families or children, however, the bill would better enable nursing home quality-of-care monitors to accurately monitor the quality of services provided to clients.

(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:

The bill does not create or change a program providing services to families or children, however, the bill would better enable nursing home quality-of-care monitors to accurately monitor the quality of services provided to clients.

(1) parents and guardians?

N/A

(2) service providers?

N/A

(3) government employees/agencies?

N/A

D. STATUTE(S) AFFECTED:

Creates section 400.1185, F.S.

E. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS:

None.

III. FISCAL ANALYSIS & 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:

The bill does not require a city or county to expend funds or to take action requiring the expenditure of funds.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

This bill does not reduce the authority of counties or municipalities to raise revenue.

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

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VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

N/A

VII. SIGNATURES:

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