

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 7013 PCB OTM 20-06 OGSR/Residential Facilities Serving Victims of Sexual Exploitation

SPONSOR(S): Oversight, Transparency & Public Management Subcommittee; Daniels and others

TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 7034

FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION: 118 Y's 0 N's **GOVERNOR'S ACTION:** Approved

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

HB 7013 passed the House on February 5, 2020, and subsequently passed the Senate on March 3, 2020.

The Open Government Sunset Review Act requires the Legislature to review each public record and each public meeting exemption five years after enactment. If the Legislature does not reenact the exemption, it automatically repeals on October 2 of the fifth year after enactment.

Human trafficking is the "transporting, soliciting, recruiting, harboring, providing, enticing, maintaining, or obtaining another person for the purpose of exploitation of that person." An estimated 40.6 million persons were the victims of human trafficking in 2016, with one in four victims being children. In 2018, 400 children were verified as victims of commercial sexual exploitation in Florida.

Safe houses and safe foster homes are certified by the Department of Children and Families to care for sexually exploited children. Safe houses and safe foster homes must provide a safe, separate, and therapeutic environment tailored to the needs of commercially sexually exploited children. Safe houses and safe foster homes must also provide a variety of services to aid sexually exploited children, such as victim-witness and family counseling, behavioral health care, and substance abuse screening.

Current law provides public record exemptions for information about the location of safe houses, safe foster homes, and other residential facilities serving child victims of commercial sexual exploitation and residential facilities serving adult victims of human trafficking involving commercial sexual activity. However, the confidential and exempt location information may be provided to an agency in order to maintain health and safety standards and to address emergencies.

The bill saves from repeal the public record exemptions, which will repeal on October 2, 2020, if this bill does not become law.

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state or local governments.

The bill was approved by the Governor on June 18, 2020, ch. 2020-49, L.O.F., and will become effective on October 1, 2020.

I. SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION

A. EFFECT OF CHANGES:

Background

Open Government Sunset Review Act

The Open Government Sunset Review Act (Act)¹ sets forth a legislative review process for newly created or substantially amended public record or public meeting exemptions. It requires the automatic repeal of an exemption on October 2nd of the fifth year after its creation or substantial amendment, unless the Legislature reenacts the exemption.²

The Act provides that a public record or public meeting exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose. In addition, it may be no broader than is necessary to meet one of the following purposes:

- Allow the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, which administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption.
- Protect sensitive personal information that, if released, would be defamatory or would jeopardize an individual's safety; however, only the identity of an individual may be exempted under this provision.
- Protect trade or business secrets.³

If, and only if, in reenacting an exemption that will repeal, the exemption is expanded (essentially creating a new exemption), then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are required.⁴ If the exemption is reenacted with grammatical or stylistic changes that do not expand the exemption, if the exemption is narrowed, or if an exception to the exemption is created then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are not required.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking⁵ is a form of modern-day slavery, which involves the exploitation of persons for commercial sex or forced labor.⁶ An estimated 40.6 million persons were the victims of human trafficking in 2016, with one in four victims being children.⁷ In 2018, 400 children were verified as victims of commercial sexual exploitation in Florida.⁸

Human traffickers use various techniques to instill fear in victims and to keep them enslaved,⁹ including the use of "violence, threats, deception, [and] debt bondage."¹⁰ Some traffickers keep their victims under lock and key.¹¹ However, the most frequently used practices are less obvious techniques that include isolating victims from the public and family members; confiscating passports, visas, or other identification documents; using or threatening to use violence towards victims or their families; telling victims they will be imprisoned or deported for immigration violations if they contact authorities; and

¹ Section 119.15, F.S.

² Section 119.15(3), F.S.

³ Section 119.15(6)(b), F.S.

⁴ Article I, S. 24(c), FLA. CONST.

⁵ The term "human trafficking" means the transporting, soliciting, recruiting, harboring, providing, enticing, maintaining, or obtaining another person for the purpose of exploitation of that person. Section 787.06(2)(d), F.S.

⁶ Section 787.06(1)(a), F.S.

⁷ *Forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking*, INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION, <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang--en/index.htm> (last visited Jan. 11, 2019).

⁸ Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, Rep. No. 19-05 (July 2019), available at <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/MonitorDocs/Reports/pdf/1905rpt.pdf> (last visited Jan. 17, 2020).

⁹ Section 787.06(1), F.S.

¹⁰ *The Facts*, POLARIS PROJECT, <https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/facts> (last visited Jan. 11, 2020).

¹¹ *Id.*

controlling the victims' funds by holding the money ostensibly for safekeeping.¹² It is estimated that human trafficking "generates \$150 billion dollars in illegal profits a year."¹³

Residential Treatment for Human Trafficking Victims

Safe Houses

A "safe house" is a group residential placement certified by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to care for sexually exploited children.¹⁴ Safe houses must provide "a safe, separate, and therapeutic environment tailored to the needs of commercially sexually exploited children who have endured significant trauma and are not eligible for relief and benefits under the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act."¹⁵ Sexually exploited children older than six who have been found to be dependent or delinquent may be placed in a safe house or safe foster home by DCF if an assessment indicates such placement is necessary.¹⁶

Each safe house must use strength-based and trauma informed approaches to care, serve exclusively one sex, group child victims by age or maturity level, and care for child victims in a manner that separates them from children with other needs.¹⁷ Safe houses must have staff members who are awake and on duty 24 hours a day and provide a variety of services such as victim-witness and family counseling, behavioral health care, and substance abuse screening.¹⁸ Safe houses are inspected by DCF prior to certification and annually thereafter.¹⁹ In November 2018, 54 safe house beds were licensed and certified in Florida, an increase from 34 beds reported in 2017.²⁰

Safe Foster Homes

A "safe foster home" is a family foster home²¹ certified by DCF to care for sexually exploited children.²² Florida requires safe foster homes to provide the same services and meet the same requirements as safe houses, except the requirements to have staff awake and on duty 24 hours a day do not apply.²³ In November 2018, 29 safe foster home beds were available, an increase from 15 beds available in 2017.²⁴

Other Residential Facilities

Traditional residential facilities serve both children and adults who are victims of sexual exploitation. If these facilities serve adults, they cannot be designated as a safe house or safe foster home.²⁵

Public Record Exemption under Review

In 2015, the Legislature created public record exemptions for information about the location of safe houses, safe foster homes, and residential facilities serving child victims of commercial sexual exploitation and residential facilities serving adult victims of human trafficking involving commercial

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour*, INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION, http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/ilo-bookstore/order-online/books/WCMS_24339/lang--en/index.htm (last visited Jan. 11, 2020).

¹⁴ Section 409.1678(1)(b), F.S. The term "commercial sexual exploitation" means the use of any person under the age of 18 years for sexual purposes in exchange for money, goods, or services or the promise of money, goods, or services. Section 409.016(1), F.S.

¹⁵ Section 409.1678(2)(a), F.S.

¹⁶ Section 39.524, F.S.

¹⁷ Section 409.1678(2)(c), F.S. Safe houses must also be licensed as a residential child-caring agency.

¹⁸ Sections 409.1678(2)(c) and 409.1678(2)(d), F.S.

¹⁹ Section 409.1678(2)(f), F.S.

²⁰ *Supra* note 8.

²¹ Section 409.1678(2)(c), F.S. Safe foster homes must also be licensed as a family foster home.

²² Section 409.1678(1)(a), F.S.

²³ Section 409.1678(2)(c), F.S.

²⁴ *Supra* note 8.

²⁵ Section 409.1678(1)(a) and (b), F.S. The definitions of the terms "safe foster home" and "safe house" are specifically restricted to "sexually exploited children."

sexual activity.²⁶ Specifically, the information regarding the location of these facilities held by an agency is confidential and exempt²⁷ from public records requirements.²⁸ However, the confidential and exempt information may be provided to any agency as necessary to maintain health and safety standards and to address emergency situations in the residential facilities.²⁹ The public record exemptions do not apply to facilities licensed by the Agency for Health Care Administration.³⁰

The 2015 public necessity statement³¹ for the exemptions provides the following:

Safe houses, safe foster homes, and other residential facilities serving victims of sexual exploitation . . . or adult victims of human trafficking involving commercial sexual activity, are intended as refuges for sexually exploited victims from those who exploited them. If the individuals who victimized these people were able to learn the location of such facilities, they may attempt to contact their victims, exploit their vulnerabilities, and return them to the situations in which they were victimized. Even without the return of these victims to their former situations, additional contact with those who victimized them would have the effect of continuing their victimization and inhibiting their recoveries. Additionally, knowledge about the location of safe houses, safe foster homes, and other residential facilities serving victims of sexual exploitation . . . or adult victims of human trafficking involving commercial sexual activity, could enable other individuals to locate and attempt to victimize the residents.³²

Pursuant to the Open Government Sunset Review Act, the exemptions will repeal on October 2, 2020, unless reenacted by the Legislature.³³

During the 2019 interim, subcommittee staff met with staff from DCF and the Department of Legal Affairs (DLA) to discuss the exemptions as part of the review process. DCF and DLA staff indicated they have not received any complaints concerning the exemptions nor did they encounter issues in implementing the exemptions. Neither agency was aware of any litigation involving the exemptions. DCF and DLA recommended the exemptions be reenacted as is.

Effect of the Bill

The bill removes the scheduled repeal date of the public record exemptions, thereby maintaining the exemptions for information about the location of safe houses, safe foster homes, other residential facilities serving child victims of commercial sexual exploitation, and residential facilities serving adult victims of human trafficking involving commercial sexual activity.

²⁶ Chapter 2015-147, L.O.F., codified as ss. 409.1678(6) and 787.06(9), F.S. The term “commercial sexual activity” includes any violation of chapter 796, F.S., or an attempt to commit any such offense, and includes sexually explicit performances and the production of pornography. Section 787.06(2)(b), F.S.

²⁷ There is a difference between records the Legislature designates exempt from public record requirements and those the Legislature deems confidential and exempt. A record classified as exempt from public disclosure may be disclosed under certain circumstances. See *WFTV, Inc. v. Sch. Bd. of Seminole*, 874 So.2d 48, 53 (Fla. 5th DCA 2004), review denied 892 So.2d 1015 (Fla. 2004); *City of Rivera Beach v. Barfield*, 642 So.2d 1135 (Fla. 4th DCA 1994); *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So.2d 683, 687 (Fla. 5th DCA 1991). If the Legislature designates a record as confidential and exempt from public disclosure, such record may not be released by the custodian of public records, to anyone other than the persons or entities specifically designated in statute. See Op. Att’y Gen. Fla. 85-62 (1985).

²⁸ See ss. 409.1678(6) and 787.06(9), F.S.

²⁹ Sections 409.1678(6)(b) and 787.06(9)(b), F.S.

³⁰ Sections 409.1678(6)(c) and 787.06(9)(c), F.S.

³¹ Article I, s. 24(c), FLA. CONST., requires each public record exemption “state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption.”

³² Section 3, ch. 2015-147, L.O.F.

³³ Sections 409.1678(6)(d) and 787.06(10)(d), F.S.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.