

# FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BILL ANALYSIS

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**BILL #:** [HB 1515](#)

**TITLE:** Pub. Rec./Uterine Fibroid Research Database

**SPONSOR(S):** Dunkley

**COMPANION BILL:** [CS/SB 864](#) (Sharief)

**LINKED BILLS:** [HB 327](#) (Dunkley and Valdés)

**RELATED BILLS:** [CS/SB 196](#) (Sharief)

## Committee References

[Health Professions & Programs](#)

16 Y, 0 N



[Government Operations](#)

18 Y, 0 N



[Health & Human Services](#)

20 Y, 0 N

## SUMMARY

### **Effect of the Bill:**

HB 1515 creates a public record exemption for patient identifying information submitted to the Department of Health for inclusion in the Uterine Fibroid Research Database.

### **Fiscal or Economic Impact:**

None.

### **Extraordinary Vote Required for Passage:**

The bill requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in both houses of the Legislature for final passage.

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## ANALYSIS

### **EFFECT OF THE BILL:**

The bill creates a [public record](#) exemption for patient identifying information, related to women diagnosed with or treated for [uterine fibroids](#), submitted to the Department of Health (DOH) for inclusion in the [Uterine Fibroid Research Database](#). Under the bill, such information is confidential and exempt from disclosure. (Section [1](#))

The bill specifies that the public record exemption is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and will stand repealed on October 2, 2031, unless saved from repeal by reenactment by the Legislature. (Section [1](#))

The bill provides a public necessity statement for the public record exemption, as required by the State Constitution. The public necessity statement states that personal identifying information, related to women diagnosed with uterine fibroids, submitted to DOH should remain confidential and exempt. If such information is made publicly available, it will violate federal patient privacy laws, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. Additionally, the public necessity statement provides that the exemption is necessary to promote the effective administration of DOH's epidemiological research and tracking activities. (Section [2](#))

The effective date of this bill is the same date that [HB 327](#) or similar legislation takes effect, if such legislation is adopted in the same legislative session or extension thereof and becomes law. (Section [3](#))

[Article I, s. 24\(c\)](#) of the Florida Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting for final passage of a newly created public record exemption. The bill creates a public record exemption; thus, it requires a two-thirds vote for final passage.

**STORAGE NAME:** h1515e.HHS

**DATE:** 2/25/2026

## RELEVANT INFORMATION

### SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

#### Public Records

The Florida Constitution sets forth the state’s public policy regarding access to government records, guaranteeing every person a right to inspect or copy any public record of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government.<sup>1</sup> The Legislature, however, may provide by general law an exemption<sup>2</sup> from public record requirements provided that the exemption passes by a two-thirds vote of each chamber, states with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption, and is no broader than necessary to meet its public purpose.<sup>3</sup>

Current law addresses the public policy regarding access to government records, guaranteeing every person a right to inspect and copy any state, county, or municipal record, unless the record is exempt.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the Open Government Sunset Review Act (OGSR Act) provides that a public record exemption may be created, revised, or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose 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.”<sup>5</sup> An identifiable public purpose is served if the exemption meets 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; or
- Protect trade or business secrets.<sup>6</sup>

Pursuant to the OGSR Act, a new public record exemption, or the substantial amendment of an existing public record exemption, is repealed on October 2<sup>nd</sup> of the fifth year following enactment, unless the Legislature reenacts the exemption.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, there is a difference between records the Legislature designates *exempt* from public record requirements and those the Legislature designates *confidential and exempt*. A record classified as exempt from public disclosure may be disclosed under certain circumstances. 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.<sup>8</sup>

#### Uterine Fibroids

Uterine fibroids are tumors that grow in a woman's uterus.<sup>9</sup> These growths are typically benign (noncancerous) and are the most common benign tumor affecting women.<sup>10</sup> Uterine fibroids are rare before puberty, increase in

<sup>1</sup> [Art. I, s. 24\(a\), FLA. CONST.](#)

<sup>2</sup> A “public record exemption” means a provision of general law which provides that a specified record, or portion thereof, is not subject to the access requirements of [s. 119.07\(1\), F.S.](#), or s. 24, Art. I of the Florida Constitution. See [s. 119.011\(8\), F.S.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Art. I, s. 24\(c\), FLA. CONST.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [S. 119.01, F.S.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [S. 119.15\(6\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> [S. 119.15\(3\), F.S.](#)

<sup>8</sup> 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); *State v. Wooten*, 260 So. 3d 1060, 1070 (Fla. 4th DCA 2018); *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); Op. Att’y Gen. Fla. 04- 09 (2004).

<sup>9</sup> The uterus is a hollow muscular organ that nourishes the developing baby during pregnancy. University of Florida Health (UFHealth), *Hysterectomy*, <https://ufhealth.org/hysterectomy> (last visited February 19, 2026).

<sup>10</sup> National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), *Uterine Leiomyomata*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK546680/> (last visited February 19, 2026).

prevalence during the reproductive years, and decrease in size after menopause. As many as one in five women have fibroids during their childbearing years, and half of all women have them by age 50. Fibroids are also more common in Black women, women with high blood pressure, obesity, early onset of periods, late age of menopause, older women, and women with a family history of fibroids.<sup>11</sup>

Although the exact cause of fibroids is unknown, they are thought to be caused by hormones in the body and family history or genes.<sup>12</sup> In addition to age, race and ethnic origin, and family history, other known risk factors include:<sup>13</sup>

- **Obesity:** Overweight or obese women are two or three times more likely to get fibroids than normal weight women.
- **Eating habits:** Eating a lot of red meat and ham is linked with higher risk of fibroids.
- **Vitamin D deficiency:** Vitamin D inhibits fibroid growth, but studies indicate only 10 percent of Black women have adequate levels.<sup>14</sup>

### Diagnosis of Fibroids

Fibroids vary in size and weight<sup>15</sup> and can grow in different parts of the uterus.<sup>16</sup> Although it is possible for just one fibroid to develop, most often there are multiple. Fibroids are not always easy to diagnose, as some women have no symptoms. However, common symptoms are bleeding between periods, heavy bleeding during periods, periods that last longer than normal, urinary frequency and urgency, pelvic cramping or pain with periods, feeling fullness or pressure in the lower belly, and painful intercourse.<sup>17</sup>

Fibroids can also be diagnosed through a pelvic exam, which may show a change in the shape of a woman's uterus, or through the following tests:<sup>18</sup>

- *Ultrasound*, which uses sound waves to create a picture of the uterus.
- *Magnetic resonance imaging*, which uses powerful magnets and radio waves to create a picture.
- *Saline infusion sonogram*, where saline is injected into the uterus to make it easier to see the uterus using ultrasound.
- *Hysteroscopy*, which uses a long, thin tube inserted through the vagina and into the uterus to examine the inside of the uterus.
- *Endometrial biopsy*, which removes a small piece of the lining of the uterus to check for cancer if a woman has unusual bleeding.

### Uterine Fibroids Data

Currently, the main uterine fibroids data source in the state is through a data-sharing agreement between the Department of Health (DOH) and the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA). If a woman has a hospitalization related to fibroids, this information is captured via the hospital discharge record. Current law

<sup>11</sup> UFHealth, *Uterine Fibroids*, <https://ufhealth.org/uterine-fibroids> (last visited February 19, 2026).

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> Florida Department of Health Hernando County, *Uterine Fibroids, 2021 Florida Data Report*, <https://newsroomarchive.floridahealth.gov/hernando/2021/07/UterineFibroids2021Report.html> (last visited February 19, 2026).

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* Sunlight in moderation, supplements, and certain food sources can help improve Vitamin D levels.

<sup>15</sup> *Supra* note **Error! Bookmark not defined.** Some fibroids are microscopic, while others fill the entire uterus and weigh several pounds.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.* Fibroids can grow in the muscle wall of the uterus (myometrial); just under the surface of the uterine lining (submucosal); just under the outside lining of the uterus (subserosal); or on a long stalk on the outside the uterus or inside the uterus (pedunculated).

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

requires hospitals to submit hospital discharge data to AHCA,<sup>19</sup> which AHCA then transmits to DOH per the data-sharing agreement.

In 2024, there were 18,154 hospitalizations related to uterine fibroids among Florida women ages 15-54.<sup>20</sup> Uterine fibroids place significant financial burdens on the United States' health care system and economy, with an estimated \$34 billion in associated annual health care costs.<sup>21</sup>

### [Uterine Fibroid Research Database](#)

In 2022, the Legislature required DOH to establish a Uterine Fibroid Research Database, which includes, but is not limited to, the following information:<sup>22</sup>

- Incidence and Prevalence of women diagnosed with fibroids in Florida;
- Demographic attributes of women diagnosed with fibroids in Florida; and
- Treatments and procedures for fibroids in the state.<sup>23</sup>

To populate the database, physicians and physician assistants licensed under chapters 458<sup>24</sup> and 459,<sup>25</sup> F.S., and advanced practice registered nurses licensed under ch. 464,<sup>26</sup> F.S., must submit to DOH deidentified information relating to their diagnoses and treatments of women with fibroids to DOH, for inclusion in the database.<sup>27</sup> DOH is prohibited from including any personal identifying information of women diagnosed with or treated with uterine fibroids in the database.<sup>28</sup>

As a result of not being able to include any personal identifying information in the database, DOH has not been able to implement it. A woman may see many doctors before receiving a diagnosis and treatment for uterine fibroids. Without collecting personal identifying information, DOH is unable to deduplicate the data. If DOH were to add the information to the database, it could lead to an over-or under-representation of the public health issue.<sup>29</sup>

In 2022, the Legislature appropriated \$802,900, including \$681,048 in nonrecurring funds and \$121,852 in recurring funds, to procure, develop, and implement the database, as well as train health care providers on the reporting requirement.<sup>30</sup> DOH has since reverted back \$646,998 of the appropriated funds, since they were unable to implement the database.

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<sup>19</sup> S. [408.061, F.S.](#)

<sup>20</sup> FLHealthCharts, *Hospitalization from Uterine Fibroids*, <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsDashboards/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=UterineFibroids.Dataviewer&cid=0901> (last visited February 19, 2026).

<sup>21</sup> Yang Q, Ciebiera M, Bariani M, Ali M, Elkafas H, Boyer T, and Al-Hendy A, Endocrine Society Oxford, *Endocrine Reviews*, 2022, Vol. XX, No. XX, 1–43 *Comprehensive Review of Uterine Fibroids: Developmental Origin, Pathogenesis, and Treatment*, (Nov. 2021) available at <https://academic.oup.com/edrv/advance-article/doi/10.1210/endrev/bnab039/6422392> (last visited February 19, 2026).

<sup>22</sup> [Ch. 2022-50, L.O.F.](#)

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> Ch. 458, F.S., governs licensure and regulation of allopathic physicians (medical doctors) and physician assistants by the Florida Board of Medicine, in conjunction with DOH.

<sup>25</sup> Ch. 459, F.S., governs licensure and regulation of osteopathic physicians and physician assistants by the Florida Board of Osteopathic Medicine, in conjunction with DOH.

<sup>26</sup> Ch. 464, F.S., governs licensure and regulation of APRNs by the Board of Nursing, in conjunction with DOH.

<sup>27</sup> [S. 381.9312, F.S.](#)

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> Department of Health, *2026 Agency Legislative Bill Analysis on HB 327*, on file with the Health Professions and Programs Subcommittee.

<sup>30</sup> Ch. 2022-50, Laws of Florida.

**HB 327 (2026)**

HB 327, to which this bill is linked, authorizes DOH to include personal identifying information of women diagnosed with or treated for uterine fibroids. If passed, HB 327 takes effect July 1, 2026.

**BILL HISTORY**

| <b>COMMITTEE REFERENCE</b>                                     | <b>ACTION</b> | <b>DATE</b> | <b>STAFF<br/>DIRECTOR/<br/>POLICY CHIEF</b> | <b>ANALYSIS<br/>PREPARED BY</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <a href="#">Health Professions &amp; Programs Subcommittee</a> | 16 Y, 0 N     | 2/3/2026    | McElroy                                     | Clenord                         |
| <a href="#">Government Operations Subcommittee</a>             | 18 Y, 0 N     | 2/11/2026   | Toliver                                     | Walker                          |
| <a href="#">Health &amp; Human Services Committee</a>          | 20 Y, 0 N     | 2/24/2026   | Calamas                                     | Clenord                         |