



January 21, 2026
The Honorable Alex Andrade
Florida House of Representatives
214 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Via Email Delivery

RE: HB 437 Public Records
1/21/2026 agenda, Government Operations Subcommittee

Dear Representative Andrade:

On behalf of the Florida League of Cities members, I respectfully write to express our concerns with HB 437, which would significantly alter Florida's long-standing public records framework in ways that create substantial operational, fiscal, and staffing challenges for local governments—particularly small and mid-sized municipalities.

While cities strongly support transparency and timely access to public records, HB 437 imposes rigid mandates and penalties that do not reflect the volume, complexity, or nature of modern public records requests, nor the limited staffing resources available at the local level.

Volume and Nature of Public Records Requests

Public records request volumes vary widely by community size. In Florida's smallest cities, annual requests average approximately 75 requests per year, while mid-sized cities routinely process more than 2,800 requests annually. These requests are not uniform in scope or complexity, nor does staff always control where and how a record is stored within a system, and many involve highly sensitive or time-intensive records.

The three most frequently requested categories of records include:

- Law enforcement body-worn camera footage and investigative files;
- Broad "any and all" requests; and
- Records related to building and development activity.

Operational and Staffing Constraints

On average, only three staff members within a city are responsible for responding to public records requests, often in addition to their primary job duties.

Increased Costs and Unintended Consequences

HB 437 may unintentionally increase costs and processing time by eliminating fees for redaction and staff time, removing essential funding for public records systems, and shifting those costs to taxpayers. At the same time, misdemeanor penalties for technical or clerical delays are disproportionate and will likely make staff overly cautious, slowing responses and reducing overall efficiency.



Conclusion

Florida's public records laws are among the nation's most transparent. HB 437 could create a rigid system that burdens smaller cities, increases costs, strains staff, and delays access to records. We urge an exemption for local governments or a tiered approach based on city size and resources.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or wish to discuss these concerns further.

Sincerely,



Samuel A. Wagoner
Legislative Advocate
Florida League of Cities, Inc.

CC: Chair Chaney and members of the Government Operations Subcommittee.