

**STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION
TO HOUSE BILL NO. 5278**

**AN ACT CONCERNING SENIOR CENTERS
AND THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT**

The purported purpose of this bill - to protect the members of senior centers from certain solicitors - is a worthy one. The well-being of our senior citizens is a fundamental concern of everyone.

However, the stated purpose of the bill is to exclude the names and addresses of members of senior centers and participants in senior programs from Freedom of Information Act disclosure requirements. The bill, in all likelihood, would not keep solicitors away. Rather, it would chip away at the state's Freedom of Information Act yet again.

Solicitors can get information in a variety of ways, especially in light of today's technological advances. Turning senior center lists into private documents would be a hurdle any mediocre solicitor could clear easily.

Removing the list from the public domain could deprive the seniors of vital information and contact with the outside world. Often, legitimate firms with valuable information about health insurance options or other senior activities use the senior center lists as mailing lists, as do some retail establishments. Also, the seniors' municipal officials and state and federal legislators use the lists to contact them and learn of their concerns.

Conceivably, the seniors' voices could be muted should these lists become private documents.

The Freedom of Information Commission respectfully submits that there could be other, more effective ways to protect our senior citizens rather than this broad stroke exemption. We ask that you reject this bill and preserve public access to this information.

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