FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION STATEMENT ON SENATE BILL 492, AN ACT CONCERNING SECURITY OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES.

March 18, 2026

Section 1 of Senate Bill 492 revives an exhaustive debate in the Legislature that has been held on an almost annual basis. The concept of adding additional classifications of individuals, in this case all public employes, as well as a wide range of elected and appointed officials, whose home address would be "protected" has, for the most part, been opposed by advocates of transparency and open records for years.

Section 1 proposes to add statewide elected officers, elected probate judges, chief elected officials of municipalities, members of local or regional boards of education and members of local representative town meetings, boards of selectmen, town councils, boards of alderman and gubernatorial and legislative appointees, and "any other employee of a public agency", to the list in §1-217 of the Freedom of Information Act.

The Commission understands the security concerns which initially led to the enactment of §1-217, more than 25 years ago. That section permitted public agencies not to disclose the home addresses of an enumerated list of certain "at risk" public officials such as police officers, judges and others directly involved in the criminal justice system. But every year, it seems, another agency or another profession attempts to have the addresses of its employees included in §1-217, without really understanding the limited scope of the statute, which should not be viewed as a cure for safety and privacy concerns.

In March 2012, the General Assembly limited §1-217 (Public Act 12-3) and basically eliminated the idea of restricting any address on a voter registration list. This was done in recognition of the reality that a complete prohibition on disclosure of certain residential addresses is unworkable, impossible and ignores the public policy behind numerous provisions within Title 9 that require the disclosure of residential addresses.

Section 1-217 is not the panacea that many believe it to be. Subsection (a) of the statute prohibits public agencies from releasing the residential addresses of certain covered persons from the agencies' personnel, medical, or similar files, only. Subsection (d) of the statute provides that the residential addresses of certain covered persons may not be removed from land records, voter records, and grand lists. And subsection (c) establishes a process whereby a covered employee can request that public records other than personnel files, voter records, land records, and grand lists, which might contain his or her residential address, be altered to substitute a business address. However, the public agency only needs to do its best efforts to accommodate such a request. Thus, §1-217 only protects the residential addresses of protected employees in personnel, medical, or similar files.

Finally, the reality is that times have changed since the initial enactment of §1-217. For better or worse, the fact is that the residential addresses of most people are now readily available for free, or for a nominal charge, on the Internet and through other commercial services.

For all the reasons stated above, the Freedom of Information Commission urges the rejection of Section 1 of Senate Bill 492.

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