



**SOCIEDAD INTERAMERICANA DE PRENSA
INTER AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION
SOCIEDADE INTERAMERICANA DE IMPRENSA**

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March 2, 2023

Honorable Robert Alexander (Alex) Andrade (R)
State Representative, Florida
226 South Palafox Place, Suite 401B
Pensacola, FL 32502-5828
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Mr. Representative,

On behalf of the Inter American Press Association, an organization dedicated to defending press freedom in the Americas, based in Miami, we express our concern about bill HB 991 because it contradicts principles on freedom press at the state, national and international levels.

The bill will affect press freedom and the public's right to information by making it easier to sue journalists and media for defamation. In addition, it will create an inhibitory effect in the media and information sources that have great value when denouncing irregularities.

If approved, this law would violate standards of press freedom. It would nullify the malice doctrine that has protected independent journalism since the New York Times vs. Sullivan Supreme Court decision in 1964. In addition, it would reverse the benefits of Florida's anti-SLAPP law, allowing judges to throw out costly and unsubstantiated lawsuits intended to intimidate and silence the media and critics.

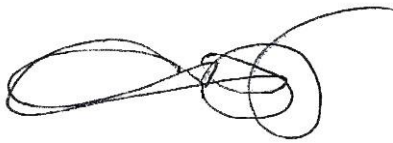
We are concerned that bill HB 991 will become a protective shield for public servants and will have a devastating effect on investigative journalism and its

information sources, contrary to the oversight role of the media in a democracy and to the principles of transparency in public affairs.

We are also concerned that this new legislation sets back the progress made in press freedom in the Americas, as countries in the region have already adopted principles of actual malice, anti-SLAPP laws, and the First Amendment into their laws, jurisprudence, and constitutions.

For these reasons and as an organization that defends and promotes press freedom as a cornerstone of democracy, we ask you to withdraw your bill.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Carlos Jornet
President
IAPA Committee on Freedom of the Press and Information