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**Civil Rights Organizations File Appeal in Case Involving Pasco County's
Predictive Policing Program**

Last Thursday, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF), the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and Southern Legal Counsel (SLC) filed an [appeal](#) on behalf of nonprofit civil rights organization the Council on American-Islamic Relations-Florida (CAIR-FL), which initiated several public records requests seeking information about Pasco County Sheriff's Office's predictive policing program that, without any notice to parents or guardians, placed students on secret lists and identified those they believed were most likely to commit future crimes. CAIR-FL requested deidentified demographic information of the individuals placed on the secret lists. The Sheriff's Office claimed that the requested information was exempt from disclosure and refused to provide it.

In 2022, LDF, SPLC, and SLC filed a [lawsuit](#) against the sheriff's office on behalf of CAIR-FL because the sheriff's office's refusal to provide the information requested violated the Florida Public Records Act. After nearly two years of delay, and following months of litigation, the sheriff's office claimed that it discontinued their predictive policing program and finally fulfilled CAIR-FL's public records requests, but it refused to provide CAIR-FL the lawfully required attorneys' fees and costs related to the Public Records request.

The sheriff's office asserted that it was exempt from providing the records during the timeframe requested, and as a result did not have to pay these costs and fees. The trial court ruled in favor of the sheriff's office. LDF, SPLC, and SLC are representing CAIR-FL on appeal. The appeal argues that the information requested was not exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Act and therefore the sheriff's office's unjust delay in producing the documents makes CAIR-FL entitled to reasonable attorneys' fees and costs.

"The Pasco County Sheriff's Office maintained a hidden predictive policing program that targeted children, students, and residents of Pasco County. Through the advocacy of numerous parents, advocates, organizations, and through CAIR-FL's efforts to uncover the truth of this program, it was purportedly discontinued. But the sheriff's office's two years of delay in producing the requested documents was wholly unjustified." said LDF

Senior Counsel Amia Trigg. “Just as the sheriff’s office was lawfully required to produce records about its dangerous predictive policing program, the office is also lawfully required to provide CAIR-FL reasonable attorney fees and costs. We are hopeful that the appellate court will rule in our favor and hold the sheriff’s office accountable.”

Southern Legal Counsel Attorney Dan Marshall pointed out that government agencies have a responsibility to comply with public records requests in a timely fashion. “When they flaunt the law to the point that an organization has to obtain legal assistance to force the agency to comply, the law requires them to take responsibility for the costs incurred,” Marshall said.

“This case is important not only to ensure government agencies comply with public records laws, including paying attorney’s fees when sued, but also to establish that they may not abuse public records exemptions to avoid public scrutiny of critical programs,” said SPLC Senior Supervising Attorney Sam Boyd.

A copy of the appeal is available [here](#).

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Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.

The Southern Poverty Law Center is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements, and advance the human rights of all people. For more information, visit www.splcenter.org.

Southern Legal Counsel is a statewide, nonprofit law firm that works proactively to ensure fairness, social justice and government accountability for Floridians through focused, high-impact initiatives, policy advocacy and civil litigation.

CAIR-Florida is the state’s largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, protect civil rights, promote justice, and empower American Muslims.

