



CITIZENS FOR
RESPONSIBILITY &
ETHICS IN WASHINGTON

September 30, 2022

BY EMAIL: desantis.opengov@eog.myflorida.com

Executive Office of Governor Ron DeSantis
ATTN: Office of Open Government
400 S. Monroe Street
Suite 209
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Public Information Officer:

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington ("CREW") makes this request for records from the Executive Office of the Governor pursuant to the Public Records Act, Chapter 119 of the Florida Statutes.

Specifically, CREW requests the following records from July 1st, 2022 to the date this request is processed:

1. All communications within the office of Governor Ron DeSantis regarding the transportation of migrants from San Antonio, Texas to Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts on September 14th, 2022, including but not limited to the arrangement of flights, communications with the office of Texas Governor Greg Abbott(?), and communications mentioning Vertol Systems Company, Inc..
2. Records sufficient to show the total amount of state funds expended on transportation of migrants from San Antonio, Texas to Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts on September 14th, 2022.
3. Records sufficient to show the total amount of state funds expended on transportation of migrants from San Antonio, Texas, to any other location between July 1st, 2022 and the date this request is processed.
4. Any informational materials provided by anyone acting on behalf of Governor DeSantis to migrants regarding transportation and resettlement from Texas to Massachusetts, including but not limited to brochures or pamphlets regarding potential benefits available after transportation.
5. All communications sent by or to Governor DeSantis's Office regarding the

woman known as “Perla,” including but not limited to any records sufficient to identify “Perla.”

6. All communications, contracts, agreements, or other materials exchanged between Senior Advisor for Public Safety Larry Keefe, or any individual acting on behalf of the office of Governor DeSantis and Vertol Systems Company, Inc. regarding the transportation of migrants from San Antonio, Texas to Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts on September 14th, 2022.
7. All communications sent by or to Governor DeSantis’s office regarding the intended transportation of migrants from San Antonio, Texas to Delaware in September 2022.

Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics. We seek records of any kind, including paper records, electronic records, audiotapes, videotapes, photographs, data, and graphical material. Our request includes without limitation all correspondence, letters, emails, text messages, facsimiles, telephone messages, voice mail messages, and transcripts, notes, or minutes of any meetings, telephone conversations, or discussions. Our request also includes any attachments to emails and other records, as well as emails to which the subjects of this request were cc’ed or bcc’ed.

By way of background, on September 14, 2022, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis chartered two planes to transport almost 50 migrants from San Antonio, Texas to Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts.^{1,2} While DeSantis claimed that the migrants boarded the flights “voluntarily,” several migrants told reporters that they were recruited onto the flights under false pretenses. According to press reports, a woman who identified herself as Perla approached the migrants in San Antonio offering hotel accommodations, food, transportation, and housing if they boarded the flights.³ Additionally, the migrants were provided with a misleading brochure describing the resettlement benefits that they would receive if they relocated to Massachusetts.⁴ The Florida Department of Transportation chartered the flights through Vertol Systems Company, which has ties to DeSantis through his “public safety czar” Larry Keefe, who has represented Vertol in several lawsuits.⁵ The spending exceeded market rates for charter flights at over \$1 million, sparking outrage.⁶

¹ Eliza Fawcett, Patricia Mazzei, and Remy Tumin, Florida Flies 2 Planeloads of Migrants to Martha’s Vineyard, *New York Times*, Sep. 14, 2022,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/14/us/desantis-florida-migrants-marthas-vineyard.html>.

² Molly Hennessy-Fiske, Beth Reinhard, and Maria Sacchetti, Mysteries, legal challenges follow Fla. Gov. Ron DeSantis’s migrant flights, *Washington Post*, Sep. 25, 2022,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/09/25/desantis-perla-migrant-flight-marthas-vineyard/>.

³ Judd Legum, The smoking gun in Martha’s Vineyard, *Popular Information*, Sep. 19, 2022,

<https://popular.info/p/the-smoking-gun-in-marthas-vineyard>.

⁴ Priscilla Alvarez, Polo Sandoval, Maria Santana, and Kristina Sgueglia, Attorneys for migrants sent to Martha’s Vineyard looking into origination of brochures they believe were handed out under ‘false pretenses’, *CNN*, Sep. 20, 2022,

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/19/us/migrants-marthas-vineyard-brochure/index.html>.

⁵ Ana Ceballos, Romy Ellenbogen, Mary Ellen Klas, and Lawrence Mower, Company hired to arrange DeSantis’ migrant flights is tied to high-level state official, *Miami Herald*, Sep. 23, 2022,

<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article266177831.html>.

⁶ Hennessy-Fiske, Reinhard, and Sacchetti, *Washington Post*, Sep. 25, 2022.

There have already been concerns raised about the legality of this transportation and whether coercive tactics were used to gain the cooperation of the migrants.⁷ It is of great concern that a vulnerable group of individuals might have been intentionally misled by government agents, as has been claimed by the migrants in question.⁸ Furthermore, such transportation of migrants is in line with Gov. DeSantis' previous rhetoric on topics of immigration and clearly holds a political interest for him as he gains support from a base concerned with immigration, making it a matter of great public interest to know whether taxpayer funds were used in a politically motivated activity. The requested records will elucidate the motivations behind this unprecedented activity and allow the public to evaluate the merits of this use of public funds.

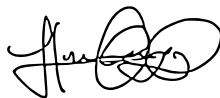
If it is your position that any portion of the requested records is exempt from disclosure, Chapter 119 requires you to state the basis of the exemption you contend is applicable. Fla. Stat. § 119.07(1)(e). CREW further requests that you state in writing and with particularity the reasons for any conclusion that a record is exempt or confidential. Fla. Stat. § 119.07(1)(f). If some portions of the requested records are properly exempt from disclosure, Chapter 119 requires you to redact those portions and produce the remainder of the requested records. Fla. Stat. § 119.07(1)(d).

CREW agrees to pay up to \$100 for copies of the requested records. If copying fees are expected to exceed this amount, or if you anticipate that "extensive use" of information technology resources or extensive clerical or supervisory assistance as defined in section 119.07(4)(d) will be needed to fulfill this request, please contact me at (202) 408-5565 or nsus@citizensforethics.org.

Where possible, please produce records in electronic format. Please send the requested records to me at either [REDACTED] and foia@citizensforethics.org or Honora Overby, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, [REDACTED].

Please contact me if you have any questions about this request or foresee any problems in fully releasing the requested records. We anticipate you will fulfill your obligations under Chapter 119. If it is necessary to file an action to enforce the Public Records Act, the court may award reasonable costs of enforcement, including attorneys' fees. Fla. Stat. § 119.12. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,



Honora Overby
Research Intern

⁷ Alvarez, Sandoval, Santana, and Sgueglia, *CNN*, Sep. 20, 2022.

⁸ Hennessy-Fiske, Reinhard, and Sacchetti, *Washington Post*, Sep. 25, 2022.