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**Senator Berman and Representative Skidmore File
Legislation Cracking Down on Human Trafficking Predators**

Tallahassee, FL - Senator Lori Berman (D-Delray Beach) and Representative Kelly Skidmore (D-Boca Raton) have filed legislation to increase penalties for specific human trafficking violations.

While legislation in recent years has taken important steps toward adequately penalizing human trafficking, this proposed legislation addresses several notable gaps in current law. [SB 760](#) and [HB 521](#) raise the crimes of maintaining a house of prostitution and transporting a person for the purpose of prostitution from a misdemeanor to a second-degree felony. The proposed bill also establishes direct criminal penalties for traffickers. Lastly, another major provision that could change lives is to include alcohol in the scope of coercion. In practice, traffickers prey on individuals suffering from many types of substance-abuse related addictions. Current statute only identifies controlled substances as a means for exploitation when in reality, alcohol is more in line with circumstances that occur.

“Protecting women, children and families has always been a centerpiece of my legislative priorities. I have filed legislation over the course of my 11 years in office in many realms, but especially with the intersectionality of domestic violence, dangerous firearms, sexual assault victims’ protection, and now, to ensure human trafficking criminals are prosecuted to the fullest extent. This legislation assures that perpetrators of human trafficking know that there will be serious consequences to their actions,” shared **Senator Berman**.

“Protecting victims of human trafficking is paramount. By increasing the penalties on the traffickers who prey on the vulnerable, prosecutors will have the opportunity to decrease this threat to society and the continued exploitation of those at risk,” said **Representative Skidmore**.

“Senator Berman and Representative Skidmore’s proposed Human Trafficking legislation is an important and necessary step to ensure that individuals are punished more severely for exploiting some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Under current statutes there are inadequate consequences for many human traffickers. This bill closes loopholes that enabled offenders to profit from these sex crimes with little risk,” stated Palm Beach County State Attorney **Dave Aronberg**.

Becky Dymond of Hepzibah House/LighthousePBC, a non-profit organization based in Palm Beach County providing therapy and case management services to trafficking survivors since 2011, stated “Up to 20% of the trafficking survivors I have worked with were trafficked through alcohol addictions. Adding alcohol to the list of controlled substances meeting the minimum bar for force, fraud or coercion in trafficking charges will make a huge difference for prosecuting human traffickers, especially for adult victims manipulated through alcohol addictions.”

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