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Senator Lori Berman and Representative Kelly Skidmore Re-File Legislation Cracking Down on Human Trafficking Predators

BOCA RATON, Fla. – In recognition of [National Human Trafficking Prevention Month](#), **Senator Lori Berman (D-Boca Raton)** and **Representative Kelly Skidmore (D-Boca Raton)** announce they have re-filed legislation to increase penalties for specific human trafficking violations.

[SB 166](#) and [HB 59](#) addresses several notable gaps in current law by raising the crimes of maintaining a house of prostitution from a misdemeanor to a second-degree felony. The proposed bill also establishes direct criminal penalties for traffickers and expands the scope of coercion to include alcohol. This change addresses the reality that traffickers prey on individuals using many types of controlled substances and alcohol.

“Protecting women, children and families has always been a centerpiece of my legislative priorities. I have filed legislation to address human trafficking over the course of my 12-plus 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**.

“Directly punishing the miscreants who have chosen a career in preying on individuals offers prosecutors the ability to reduce the sure and present danger human traffickers have created in our society. Targeting these criminals with enhanced penalties will finally punish them in a way that effectively dismantles this criminal enterprise,” said **Representative Skidmore**.

“Senator Berman and Representative Skidmore’s proposed Human Trafficking legislation is a necessary step to ensure that individuals who exploit the most vulnerable members of our community are punished more severely. 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 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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