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**Representative Christine Hunschofsky and Senator Lauren Book File Bills to Implement Recommendations of the Twentieth Statewide Grand Jury**

*Legislation Creates a Mental Health Commission to Recommend Improvements to Mental Health Services Statewide*

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Representative Christine Hunschofsky (D-Parkland) and Senator Lauren Book (D-Plantation)** have filed [HB 1447/SB 1888](#) to create a statewide mental health commission. The commission will be charged with evaluating Florida's broken mental health assessment and delivery system and to make much-needed recommendations. The commission will evaluate the deficiencies and gaps that currently exist in how the hodge-podge of agencies provide mental health services and will be charged with making recommendations on how we can serve all Floridians more efficiently and more effectively.

The bills would implement the recommendations from the Third Interim Report of the 20th Statewide Grand Jury, submitted December 10, 2020, regarding the state's mental health system. The Grand Jury was empaneled after the February 14, 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland. The Grand Jury's report highlighted deficiencies in funding, leadership and services related to mental health care throughout Florida and called on legislators, the Governor, and others who make up what they called a patchwork system of mental health service providers to investigate and resolve critical deficiencies in our mental health system. The deficiencies included less funding per capita in Florida than any other state for mental health care, service-related issues because of funding deficiencies as well as a lack of interagency cooperation, and leadership issues related to statewide oversight of the many mental health providers and programs.

**Senator Book** offered, "We have created a Rube Goldberg system of providing mental health services in Florida and while much of it works well for many Floridians, based on the Grand Jury findings, we know there are places we can dramatically improve services. Creating a task force of experts will be an important and necessary first step in helping us

chart a path forward.”

**Representative Hunschofsky** added, “We can no longer hide our heads in the sand. Now is the time to recognize that this makeshift system with numerous providers, conflicting laws and hodge-podge policies needs to be reevaluated at the highest level. Our bill seeks to do just that by way of a working commission that will give us a complete and honest evaluation of our system and provide us guidance for fixing what’s broken and enhancing what works. In the wake of the Parkland shootings, as Mayor I saw first-hand how our labyrinthine system of providing mental health services hindered healing for too many families – I vowed then to fix that and this bill is a badly needed first step in doing that.”

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