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Legislative Session: Week Five

Dear Friends,

This week wraps up our fifth week and puts us officially halfway through our nine week session.

Please check out my legislative update below. Feel free to reach out to my office anytime with any questions you may have (*Local/District office in Boynton Beach is 561.292.6014 and Tallahassee office is 850.487.5031*).

Stay

well,



Lori Berman

Senator Berman's Bill Actions

**Safe Waterways Act — *PASSED ENVIRONMENT AND
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE***

SB 604

SB 604 requires, rather than simply authorizes, the Department of Health to adopt and enforce rules and issue health advisories for fecal contaminated public bathing places and beach waters. It also codifies conspicuous signage requirements so that public notification is apparent and consistent.

SB 306

**Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder — *PASSED CHILDREN,
FAMILIES & ELDER AFFAIRS COMMITTEE***

SB 306 provides funds and services to parents and children who have a little-known but significant condition called fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). FASD is an umbrella term that describes the range of serious adverse effects that can occur in an individual who was prenatally exposed to alcohol. This legislation would define FASP as a developmental disability, opening up critical home and community-based services.

2022-23 General Appropriations Act

At the end of last week, the Senate released the first draft of its annual spending plan, topping \$108 billion.

In the upcoming weeks, I will be sharing more about the budget as it continues to be formulated. A lot remains up in the air but we will be diving into the

various silos/categories, such as health care, education, justice, agriculture and environment. In addition, I will provide an update on the preliminary funding requests I hope to successfully bring home to my constituents.

The full Senate will be taking up this initial draft and budget amendments, as passed by the Appropriations Committee this past week, on Thursday of this upcoming week (February 17).

[Click Here for a Summary of the Senate's Proposed Budget](#)

Controversial Bills/Issues to Watch

[SJR 1412: Revisions or Amendments of the State Constitution by Citizen Initiative](#)

An overbroad, seemingly debatable first amendment restriction, SJR 1412 seeks to silence the voices of citizens. This resolution would place an amendment question on the ballot asking citizens if they want to limit the “structure and procedure” of what goes on future ballots. This would essentially prevent citizens from passing initiatives that require years’ worth of work, from collecting signatures to the ballot language being approved by the Florida Supreme Court. The purpose of citizens’ initiatives is to provide an outlet for Floridians to decide when they feel the Legislature is unresponsive. It is one of five ways in which the Florida Constitution can be amended and comes with a difficult threshold to overcome. Over the last 10+ years, we have seen policies such as medical marijuana, fair districts, increases in minimum wage, restoration of felons’ rights and water/land conservation passed as a result of citizens’ initiatives, keeping in mind that the 60% passage requirement is already a heavy burden. Limiting the scope of future amendments to only allow changes in the structure and procedure, while vague and open to interpretation, is another way this Legislature wants to chip away at citizens’ voices.

[CS/SB 520: Public Records and Public Meetings](#)

I have written about this bill in previous newsletters and years, but this bill is too important not to mention again. Unfortunately, it passed on the Senate floor this past week. Transparency in Presidential searches in higher education benefits the students, faculty and staff at Florida's public colleges and universities. The only reason to remove these candidates from the sunshine is to promote inside candidates and political appointees, a trend that has been on the rise in recent years. Clearly, political appointees come with a set of conflicts of interest. The First Amendment Foundation and the United Faculty of Florida are two major opponents of this bill and I stand with both of these organizations.

SB 1834: Parental Rights in Education

Also known as "Don't Say Gay" this bill, like so many, creates a harmful scenario for school administrators and teachers. This bill would ban any classroom discussion surrounding sexual orientation and/or gender identity, erasing LGBTQ families and youth from public schools and rolling back the progress that has been made to destigmatize this important issue. Dozens of heartfelt and passionate testimony was heard, with the most difficult to hear coming from several LGBTQ youth who either attempted suicide or know those who have due to the heavy pressures they experience. Schools should be safe havens for our children to feel welcome and open, whether with teachers, peers or others. I voted against this bill and will continue fighting it, along with so many.

Surgeon General Ladapo Confirmation Hearing

As I have discussed in previous issues, I am adamantly opposed to Dr. Ladapo's appointment as our State's Doctor. You can watch the Senate Ethics & Elections Committee hearing here. Unfortunately, the next hearing for the SG's appointment is the full Senate and we expect the nomination to pass.

Meeting with the Florida Association of Women Lawyers



Presenting bills I had heard this week: SB 604 and SB 306



In Memoriam - Parkland Tragedy

This Monday, February 14 marks the fourth anniversary of the horrific Parkland massacre, tragically taking the lives of 14 students and three teachers, wounding 17 others, and forever shattering so many lives. While we still mourn these souls and promise to never forget their names, mass shootings are still not a thing of the past. We must continue to turn our grief into purpose, our sadness into action and continue to honor these victims, and countless others, with a movement. Let us not forget the devastating effects of gun violence on our local communities, state and country. We must continue to fight for change.

Free At-Home COVID-19 Tests

President Biden's Administration launched a government website for Americans to order free COVID-19 tests. Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order four rapid antigen tests. The tests are completely free. Orders will usually ship in 7-12 days. Order your tests now so you have them if/when you need them.

[Order Free COVID-19 Tests Here](#)

[PBC COVID-19 Vaccination Sites](#)

[PBC COVID-19 Testing Sites](#)

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[State and Local Resources](#)

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Lori Berman

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NEWS

[Florida Senate passes university presidential search exemption - Tampa Bay Times](#)

Tampa Bay Times

Lori Berman, D-Boynton Beach. “Please vote no on this bill and vote for transparency.” The five universities already looking for new presidents or ...

[Florida university president searches may be shut off from public - Tallahassee Democrat](#)

Tallahassee Democrat

Lori Berman, D-Delray Beach. They needed at least two more votes to ensure the bill's defeat. SUBSCRIBER EXCLUSIVE ...

[Move to shield university president searches from public wins Florida Senate approval - Yahoo News](#)

Yahoo News

Lori Berman, D-Delray Beach. They needed at least two more votes to ensure the bill's defeat. University president searches not getting best ...

[Safe Waterways Act would help Floridians know where it's safe to swim - Yahoo News](#)

Yahoo News

Lori Berman, D-Delray Beach, and state Rep. Yvonne Hayes Hinson, D-Gainesville) and backed by numerous environmental groups across the state ...



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