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Friends and Neighbors:

Before diving into anything else, I'd like to first express my care and concern about those who found their homes/property, cars or other personal belongings under water earlier this week. We hope each of you stayed safe and were not affected severely by the enormous amount of rain that fell. While we understand the brunt was taken by the Broward County/Ft. Lauderdale areas, we want to acknowledge our friends and neighbors south of us who may have been impacted. Please be safe and know that we are thinking of you.

Session is now past the two-thirds mark and bills are rapidly moving at this stage. We anticipate having budget conference sometime next week/weekend and/or heading into week eight. No official announcements have been released yet but the days are beginning to wane and bills are moving more quickly at this stage. We will update you as we learn more ourselves.

Wishing everyone a great weekend!

All the best,

A white rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Lori Berman'.

Lori Berman

Senator Berman's Statement on DeSantis' Signage of Near-Total Abortion Ban

TALLAHASSEE, FL—State Senator Lori Berman (D-Boca Raton) offered the following statement on the final passage of Senate Bill 300:

“On Thursday night while Floridians were asleep, Governor DeSantis quietly signed the 6-week abortion ban. This law is vastly unpopular and extremely dangerous for women's health. It represents the largest rollback in women's civil rights in nearly 50 years since *Roe v. Wade*. **But it's important that every woman know abortion is still legal through 15 weeks, and the six week law won't take effect unless the Florida Supreme Court overturns a woman's right to choose.**

This is a war, and one we intend to win. We may not have won today's battle, and we may not have the numbers in the Legislature now. But we will continue to fight and win the hearts and minds of our electorate with compassion, science, and reason. When Florida sees the practical effects of this near-total abortion ban and how it negatively impacts the lives and health of the women we all know and love, it will have no choice but to reverse course.

I have a message for the women and young girls out there: don't despair. Help is out there, and it may not be in Florida. But there are nonprofit organizations and other groups that stand ready to support you and your access to healthcare (including [Emergency Medical Assistance](#)). Your Democratic allies in the Legislature won't abandon you or this fight until equality, justice, and reason are restored.”



Senator Berman's Legislative Update

SB 996: Driver License, Identification Card, and Motor Vehicle Registration Applications

This legislation passed in the Appropriations Committee on Transportation, Tourism and Economic Development this week. It would allow Floridians applying for the first time, or renewing their driver's license/ID and/or motor vehicle registration, to "opt in" for a \$1 voluntary contribution to Best Buddies International, an international nonprofit organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Currently, there are 21 other organizations in statute that have the option for motor vehicle registration and 20 for driver's license application and renewal/replacement and they're all at \$1.

Bills of Concern

CS/SB 1320: Child Protection in Public Schools

This bill seeks to expand what was referred to during the 2022 session as "Don't Say Gay". I am disheartened, as I mention in each weekly newsletter, that we are constantly attacking those with whom perhaps not all legislators agree with, be it lifestyle, culture, religion or other beliefs. Focusing on attacks in the classroom and undermining our teachers is not going to "chase the gay or trans away". They are people too and they matter and deserve love just like all of us. We already have a severe teacher shortage - what kind of message does this send to our state when we regulate further what a teacher can do in a classroom and put them at risk of losing their job for identifying a student by a pronoun he/she/they prefers? I asked these and a lot more questions during our lengthy discussion and debate in yesterday's Fiscal Policy Committee meeting. I also want to mention a book/story I brought up in my closing, and that is, the story of Jazz Jennings. We must bring these stories to light to help in our learning, growth and acceptance.

Aside from all this, SB 1320 does not even have a fiscal component, so I am still unsure as to why the bill was placed on our agenda for a hearing in the first place.

You can hear my closing debate in the Fiscal Policy Committee here, about at the - 45:30 mark. To all who were present or watched, I want to reiterate a portion of my closing remarks to ensure you know where I stand on this bill: *"...You are seen, you are heard. We may lose the battle today, but this is an ongoing war and I do believe we are on the right side of justice, and as we move on, we will see that there will be changes..."*

SB 302: Government and Corporate Activism

The bill creates a sweeping prohibition on consideration of ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) principles in state and local financial matters. Additionally, it prohibits consideration of anything other than "pecuniary factors" in the investment of funds and exercise of shareholder rights by state and local governments. We have seen that companies engaging in ESG principles have actualized better rates of return more often than those who don't. You can watch my line of questioning of the

bill sponsor [here](#), approximately at the 3:49:00 mark. This is a great [op ed](#) on the subject.

Within my line of questioning, you can see where I bring up the state's decisions to divest \$2 billion of funds from BlackRock due to their stance on ESG. BlackRock's statement in response: *"We are disturbed by the emerging trend of political initiatives like this that sacrifice access to high-quality investments and thereby jeopardize returns, which will ultimately hurt Florida's citizens. Fiduciaries should always value performance over politics."*

Additional Items Expected During Week Seven

While we do not have the agenda yet, we anticipate hearing SB 7050, another dig at elections policies, and SB 1718, a bill on immigration, next week in the Fiscal Policy Committee. Next week's update will reflect more details on these bills accordingly.





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