

Senator Book, District 32 — Press Release

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Senator Lauren Book Proposes Overhaul of Baker and Marchman Acts

Tallahassee, FL — [Senator Lauren Book \(D-Plantation\)](#) this week filed [Senate Bill 828: Mental Health and Substance Abuse](#). The bill would reform Florida's Baker Act and Marchman Act, which make up Florida's civil commitment system for mental illness and substance abuse, respectively. If passed, SB 828 would be the first comprehensive reform of the civil commitment system in Florida since its inception 50 years ago.

"It's long past time the State of Florida modernized the Baker and Marchman Acts to reflect advances in case law and best-practices in medicine and psychology, with the goal of more compassionately and effectively providing care for individuals in crisis," says Senator Book. "From preventing schoolchildren from being inappropriately Baker Acted to providing a continuum of care to achieve true stabilization and prevent re-commitment, the measures contained within this bill are badly needed and will make a difference for many."

SB 828 will establish a continuum of care so that individuals who are stabilized through treatment after being committed via the Baker Act receive a plan of care at the time of their discharge. This will serve to reduce the rate at which people are repeatedly committed under the Acts. The legislation also contains provisions to allow the court to order inpatient or outpatient treatment, and to reduce the number of children in Florida who are unnecessarily committed under the Baker Act, including penalties for Baker Acting someone on knowingly false information.

Judge Steven Leifman, a Miami-based Mental Health Court Judge, said of the proposed legislation, "As a result of the pandemic, the need to help and treat our most vulnerable Floridians with mental health and substance use disorders has never been greater. As the Baker Act turns 50, it's time to modernize the law to reflect today's science and medicine and to simplify the Marchman Act so we can help Floridians get the treatment they deserve."

"The changes proposed in SB 828 will ensure that behavioral health care is more efficiently provided, public safety is enhanced and people with mental health and substance use disorders will have an opportunity for hope and recovery," Judge Leifman continued.

The bill was filed this week and is currently awaiting committee assignments. This is Senator Book's second time attempting to usher forth critical changes to mental health and substance abuse civil commitment.