HB 199 – Time Limitation on the Prosecution of Sexual Battery Cases by Representative Davis (D-Jacksonville) and Representative Plakon (R-Longwood).

Companion Bill: SB 170- Senator Stewart (D- Orlando)

Target Population: Child victims of sexual abuse, sexual offenders, prosecutors.

Summary: Designates the act as "Donna's Law"; creates an exception to general time limitations allowing prosecution to be commenced at any time for specified sexual battery offenses against victims younger than 18.

Impact: The statute of limitations (SOL) determines the timeframe in which a criminal prosecution must be initiated. SOLs in Florida are typically standardized, starting from the day after the offender committed the crime- except in the case of sexual battery offenses. Florida already extends or removes time limitations or changes the date on which calculation of the SOL begins based
on variations due to the age of the victim, the degree of the offense, and the time it took to report the offense.

There is overwhelming evidence that victims require a substantial amount of time to process and heal before coming forward with their assault. It is common for victims, especially those victimized at a young age, to blame themselves for the assault. This can lead them to experience emotional pain, shame, fears of not being believed, blamed, and/or punishment. Victims are also often coerced by their abuser to not come forward, as in the case of Donna Hendricks - the woman named in “Donna's Law.”

Due to statutes previously in place, child victims often lost the chance to report cases of sexual battery. Sexual offenders were able to walk away freely and victims had to either live with this reality or endure the traumatizing experience of reporting their assault before they were emotionally and mentally ready. This bill will allow for victims to emotionally heal before reporting, avoiding re-traumatization and ensuring that justice will be served no matter how long it takes.

The Children's Campaign supports this legislation, which holds child sexual abusers accountable, while giving victims of child sexual abuse the time they need to come forward.

**Effective date:** Upon becoming a law.