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ICYMI: Senator Carlos G. Smith and Rep. Anna V. Eskamani File the Business Disruption Assistance Act to Support Small Businesses Impacted by Public Works Projects

Orlando, FL — 1/30/2025: This week, **Senator Carlos Guillermo Smith (D-17)** and **Representative Anna V. Eskamani (D-42)** announced the filing of the Business Disruption Assistance Act ([SB 324](#)), legislation aimed at providing critical support to small businesses affected by public works construction projects. The bill seeks to mitigate the financial hardships experienced by small businesses during infrastructure improvements, such as road construction or utility upgrades, which often result in decreased accessibility and reduced customer traffic, leading to some small businesses being forced to close.

Key Provisions of the Business Disruption Assistance Bill:

- **Direct Financial Assistance:** Establishes a grant program and low-interest loan program to provide eligible small businesses with financial relief for lost revenue during public works construction projects.
- **Marketing Campaign:** Develops a robust public awareness and marketing campaign to promote the program in partnership with local chambers of commerce and other business organizations and to encourage customer support for small businesses adversely impacted by state and local government construction activities.
- **Informational Hotline:** Requires the development of an informational hotline for small businesses to access program details
- **Reporting Requirements:** Requires the Department of Commerce to submit an annual report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives that summarizes the performance of the program, including the total number of small businesses and residents served, the total funds disbursed, and the program outcomes.

Senator Smith's Statement: *"Public works projects are a vital part of enhancing our state's and community's infrastructure, but they should not come at the expense of our small businesses. This legislation ensures that businesses impacted by construction projects have the resources they need to weather the storm. I'm proud to partner with Representative Eskamani on this important effort to protect and empower Florida's small business community."*

Representative Eskamani's Statement: *"While infrastructure improvements are essential for Florida's growth, the unintended consequences on small businesses cannot be ignored. The Business Disruption Assistance Act ensures that our local businesses, the backbone of Florida's economy, are supported during these challenging periods. By providing direct relief and fostering better communication, we can strike a balance between progress and prosperity."*

The bill has already received strong endorsements from small business owners, chambers of commerce, and local advocacy groups who recognize the urgent need for such protections. This includes Jeff Starks and Matthew Engel, owners of Maffrey's, a gift shop in downtown Orlando, and longtime small business owner and restaurateur Jason Lambert.

LaVonda Wilder, CEO/President, Eatonville Chamber of Commerce: *"Public works projects are vital, but they often come at a steep cost to nearby businesses. This bill is a game-changer, offering much-needed support to ensure that businesses can survive and thrive during construction. We are grateful to Representative Eskamani and Senator Smith for championing this issue."*

As the Business Disruption Assistance Act moves forward in the legislative process, Representative Eskamani and Senator Smith call on Floridians to voice their support. Together, we can ensure that infrastructure development benefits all without leaving small businesses behind.

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