

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

March 18, 2024

So today, I was pondering the conflux of things that happen towards the end of each legislative session, and seemingly out of nowhere, I heard a deep, instructional voice from my very distant school-days' past saying "Remember well, children: politics makes strange bedfellows." At the time, I suspected that a bedfellow was a larger, more terrifying version of a bedbug, and swore that I would never work in a state house for fear of inadvertently transporting a pillow-sized [Cimex lectularius](#) back into my own abode. In fact, when [bedbugs took over the hotels of Paris](#) last year, it made me think twice about dozing off in the House Intragovernmental Coordination Committee again, for fear of said "strange bedfellows" worming their way into my lunch bag, backpack or three-day-old Cliff bar wrapper. But today, after a little phone-Googleing while I was in the drive-thru line waiting on my Mc-Whopper-Fil-'aconator-[Royale-with-cheese](#) burger, I learned that not only are bedbugs [WAY more disgusting](#) than I thought, but that they have nothing to do with dirt but everything to do with liking warm-blooded things that breath out clouds of carbon dioxide. I also learned that they have lots of nicknames that would be cool names for my kid's rock-and-roll band, like "Red Coats" or "The Chinchies" or "Mahogany Flats." But mostly what I learned is that a bedfellow is NOT a Godzilla-sized bedbug. It is either folks that actually sleep in the same bed, or an unlikely pairing of people, initiatives or ideas. The saying, "Politics makes strange bedfellows" seems to have been made famous by some dude with the old-timey name (and btw, I can say that because I *also* have an old-timey name!) Louis Dalrymple, who did [this extremely entertaining cartoon](#) about the British not being too jazzed that the "Irish Americans" and "German Americans" were buddying up and making an "Anti Anglo-American Alliance." Anyway, this politics/bedfellow thing seems more evident as the session wanes, when days run long, and the session runs short. In the crunch of March, it is not uncommon to see friends, "frien-emies", and opportunists share a legislative sleeping bag, as it were, attaching [old legislative language to moving bills](#), bidding warm farewells across aisles as they [step away from chambers](#), and even coalescing to [share respect](#) for memories and ideas bigger than bills or parties or themselves.

So please explore the bills below, and take special note of those stitched together BFFs (BedFellowFrankensteins). Act on the Alerts at the end, since we only have a few days left. And mostly.....don't let the bedbugs bite!

--Polly

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Helpful Resources:

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- [Voices' Factsheets](#)
- [Voices' Whole Child Primer, 3rd Edition](#)



Justice, Public Safety, & School Discipline

[SB 53](#)

(Robertson-29th) Prohibits a local jurisdiction from creating a bail schedule, or policy, that mandates releasing a person from jail on unsecured judicial release. It also modifies the definition of "bail" in the code section. The bill modifies the list of crimes under "bail restricted offenses" to include various crimes, including misdemeanors and second or subsequent violations of certain crimes. No person is eligible to be released on unsecured judicial release if they were charged with a bail-restricted offense. Those individuals are only eligible for release through the use of secured means, professional bondsmen, and approved property. Any person arrested for any offense who has previously been convicted of a felony within the past seven years is not eligible for an unsecured judicial release. The bill removes the exemption for those who were deported from the country by the federal government, meaning that a judgment can be made by a court on a forfeiture of an appearance bond if the person at issue was deported and could not attend court for that reason. A surety is now released from liability if, prior to a judgment, the person at issue participates in an accountability court or enters into a pretrial release program. The bill increases the amount that bail recovery agents can charge for continuing legal education programs, the timeline for when sureties are relieved from liability due to a failure to timely file a bench warrant and forfeiture of bond, and the amount of remission of a bond to be paid to the surety.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. PASSED HOUSE. Awaits transmission to the Governor for his consideration.

[SB 421](#)

(Dixon-45th) Increases the penalties for a third or subsequent conviction of the offense of making an unlawful request for emergency services assistance in O.C.G.A. 16-10-28 to between 10 and 15 years imprisonment, a minimum fine of \$25,000, or both. If the location of response is a person's home or a place of worship, then a first violation is now treated as a felony with imprisonment of between one and 10 years, a minimum fine of \$5,000, or both. A person who is convicted of this crime is now automatically liable for restitution to any affected natural person or public or private entity for reasonable costs or damages associated with the offense, including damage to property and expenses to treat bodily injuries. Part II of SB 421 broadens the crime of aggravated assault to include when someone discharges a firearm, without legal justification, after immediately exiting a vehicle towards another vehicle or an occupied building. The crime of criminal damage to property in the first degree is broadened to include when someone discharges a firearm, without legal justification, while inside a vehicle or after immediately exiting and when that person causes damage to a building. The bill creates a new crime of drive-by shooting when a person who is either in a motor vehicle or is close to a motor vehicle that they used to drive to the location, discharges a firearm at another person, motor vehicle, occupied dwelling, or dwelling that the person should have known to be occupied, with the intent to injure or damage the property of another. The penalty is imprisonment of between five and 20 years. The crime of drive-by shooting is added to the list of crimes within the definition of "racketeering activity" under the criminal gang statute.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. PASSED HOUSE. Awaits transmission to the Governor for his consideration.

[SB 453](#)

(Payne-54th) Transfers probation and intake services of the Juvenile Court of Gordon County to the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. PASSED HOUSE. Awaits transmission to the Governor for his consideration.

[HB 500](#)

(Silcox-53rd) Creates the offense of arson of a law enforcement vehicle. Any person convicted of the offense is punished by a fine up to \$100,000 or by imprisonment for a minimum of five years with a maximum of 20 years, or both.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 509](#) (Ballinger-23rd) Expands the crime of burglary in the first and second degrees to include when a person enters the house, or other specified building or structure, of another person with the intent to commit an act of family violence.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Children and Families Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 873](#) (Gunter-8th) Codifies the ability of juvenile courts to establish a juvenile treatment court division as an alternative to the traditional judicial system for juvenile delinquency cases or child in need of services (CHINS) cases. A case may be assigned to these new courts: 1) if the prosecutor or other petitioner consents prior to the entry of adjudication or disposition; 2) as part of a disposition in a case; or 3) upon modification or revocation of probation or a new petition. Each new juvenile treatment court division must establish a planning group to develop a work plan. Planning groups are required to include: judges, prosecutors, sheriffs, public defenders, community supervision officers, and probation officers. The Council of Accountability Court judges must establish standards and practices for these divisions taking into account current research and findings published by experts on children's health needs/treatment options. The council will also create and manage a certification/peer review process to ensure local divisions are adhering to standards/practices. Further, they will create a waiver process that divisions will need to apply for if they want an exception to standards/practices. The council will also create a certification process to allow a court to demonstrate a need for additional state grant funds for one or more part-time judges to operate these divisions. Divisions established on and after July 1, 2026, will be certified or receive a waiver if they have good cause. The council is also required to develop and manage an electronic system for performance measurement that accepts data in a consistent manner. On or around July 1, 2026, and every three years afterward, the council must conduct a performance peer review of the divisions to improve the polices/practices. The court that institutes the division can request that one or more prosecutors and one or more defense attorneys serve in the division, and the clerk of the juvenile court will serve as the clerk of the division.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill will be on the Senate floor for a vote TODAY (MONDAY).

[HB 909](#) (Hagan-156th) Automatically restricts and seals the record of an offense by an individual after July 1, 2024 who was sentenced to Title 42, Chapter 8, Article 3 ('First Offenders Act'). If first offender status is revoked, then a court will unseal the records, and courts, law enforcement agencies, jails, and detention centers may disseminate the records. Those who were exonerated of guilt and discharged as a first offender prior to July 1, 2024 may petition the court to have the records sealed, and those records will be automatically sealed.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

[HB 926](#) (Reeves-99th) Provides for issuance of certificates ("Program and Treatment Completion Certificate") by a court for purposes of demonstrating rehabilitation and good moral character. The bill also sets out certain provisions regarding driver's licenses. The bill also adds the crime of battery of a healthcare worker or emergency health worker in the juvenile code.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee.

[HB 996](#) (Vance-133rd) States that in any case in which a person has been arrested for, charged by accusation or indictment with, or alleged by petition for delinquency to have committed an AIDS transmitting crime or other crime which involves the transmission of body fluids from one person to another or significant exposure to HIV, upon request by the victim or the parent or legal guardian of a minor or incompetent victim the agency responsible for the arrest or the prosecution of the alleged offense shall request that the person arrested for such offense submit to an HIV test and consent to the release of the test results to the victim. The bill also authorizes jailers who have been certified by the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Council as having successfully completed the course of training required by the 'Georgia Peace Officers Standards and Training Act' to arrest any person in violation of a criminal law which occurs in the jail or within the perimeter of jail guard lines. The jailer may also arrest anyone who has a complaint or arrest warrant pending and surrenders themselves.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 1201](#) (Gaines-120th) Allows a victim of human trafficking to have their sentence vacated when sentenced pursuant to O.C.G.A. 42-8-60, relating to probation, or O.C.G.A. 16-13-2, relating to conditional discharge of possession of controlled substances as a first offense, so long as the crime was a direct result of being a victim of human trafficking, and defines a commercial sexual exploitation recovery center' to mean a child-caring institution certified as a victim assistance program which provides full-time residential care and support services to youth through 18 years of age who are victims of sexual exploitation.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 1283](#) (Persinger-119th) Clarifies that aggravated assault with a firearm is included within the definition of "Class A designated felony act" in the Juvenile Code.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

[HR 1042](#) (Leverett-123rd) Creates the Joint Study Committee on Judicial System Compensation, which seeks to examine the current state of how public employees in the judicial system, such as state judges, county judges, prosecutors, and public defenders, are compensated and to discuss potential legislation on establishing a more uniform compensation system. The committee will consist of eight members: four senators and four representatives.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Appropriations Committee.

[SB 10](#) (Jones-10th) Increases penalties for drag racing.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

[SB 110](#) (Walker-20th) Creates a Back the Blue Fund of which the revenue commissioner will be the custodian and administer to sheriffs' offices through the Georgia Sheriff's Association for the purpose of providing bonuses to deputy sheriffs and jailers. An option will be provided to contribute \$5 to the fund upon issuance or renewal of a motor vehicle car tag.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Motor Vehicles Committee. The bill will be heard in committee this TUESDAY.

[SB 169](#) (Payne-54th) Amends O.C.G.A. 20-2-754, which revises the hearing dates for school suspensions. A hearing should be held no later than 10 school days from the beginning of the suspension unless there is an agreement between the parents and school system, in which case the hearing must be no later than 15 days after the beginning of the suspension. A hearing can be held later than 15 days upon written request to the school system by a parent or guardian

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass House Education Committee. The bill will be on the House floor for a vote TODAY (MONDAY).

[SB 232](#) (Kennedy-18th) Modifies the types and dollar amounts of fees charged and collected by probate court judges and clerks contained in O.C.G.A. 15-9-60. These fees are charged for filings such as petitions, motions, claims, and certificates, as well as for different applications, licenses, and certified copies. Conforming language in other sections of the Code relating to filing fees, license fees, and fireworks applications is contained in the bill.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. PASSED. HOUSE. The bill needs the Senate to agree to the changes the House made to progress further.

[SB 407](#) (James-35th) When documenting incidents of family violence, requires law enforcement officers to prepare an incident report that includes whether any party to the incident involving actual or alleged family violence is the subject of an active or expired protective order in the Georgia Protective Order Registry; and, to the extent reasonably obtainable, the number and nature of prior incidents involving law enforcement between the parties to the incident involving actual or alleged family violence.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

[SB 490](#) (Cowsert-46th) Increases the penalties for the felony offense of fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

[SB 517](#) (Robertson-29th) Provides for immunity from certain criminal prosecutions and civil liability against law enforcement officers whose threat or use of force is justified or otherwise lawful.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

[SB 533](#) (Strickland-17th) Allows the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) to restore an accused person back to mental competency, so that they can stand trial in an appropriate facility within a jail. In order to use these facilities, DBHDD must have a mutual agreement with the local sheriff's office.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do pass by the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

[SR 570](#) (Robertson-29th) Creates the Senate Supporting Safety and Welfare of All Individuals in Department of Corrections Facilities Study Committee.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. This is a Senate Study Committee and therefore does not need House approval.

[SR 1416](#) (Neal-79th) Creates the House Study Committee on Felony Sentencing and Punishment in Georgia.

STATUS: House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

Child Welfare & Protection

[SB 335](#) (Albers-56th) The 'Safeguarding Adopted Children from Sexual Violence Act' and expands the crime of incest to include those whose familial relationships are created by adoption.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. PASSED HOUSE. Awaits transmission to the governor for his consideration.

[SB 342](#) (Robertson-29th) Allows the Department of Human Services to use records of child abuse or neglect from the child abuse and neglect registry, or from another state, to locate, recover, or provide services to a child who is determined by the department to be missing or a victim of sexual exploitation. It also amends who can have reasonable access to records of child abuse to include the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. PASSED. HOUSE. Awaits transmission to the governor for his consideration.

[SB 370](#) (Hodges-3rd) Adds convenience stores, body art studios, manufacturing facilities, and medical offices to the list of establishments that must post a notice containing the human trafficking hotline information. The bill also requires that each board member of the Georgia Board of Massage Therapy complete at least 30 minutes of training on human trafficking awareness.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. PASSED HOUSE. Awaits transmission to the Governor for his consideration.

[SB 387](#) (Kirkpatrick-32nd) Allows an eligible child who is between the ages of 14 and 17 and who does not have an address or is in the custody of the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) to apply for an identification card without having a parent, guardian, or other adult sign or verify the application. The bill the Department of Driver Services (DDS) from collecting a fee for an identification card from a child who is in DFCS custody or who is receiving extended care youth services from DFCS. The bill authorizes the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide each child who has entered foster care with a photo of themselves within 90 days of entrance. If the child is under 14 years old, then the foster parent or placement will be provided with the photograph of the child. DFCS is required to ensure that each child receives a photograph, and each child is also required to receive an identification card.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. PASSED HOUSE. Awaits transmission to the Governor for his consideration.

[SB 483](#) (Hatchett-50th) Enters Georgia into the updated version of the 'Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children Act' and replaces existing language of the previous version of the compact if at least 35 states total join the compact. Sixteen states have currently joined the revised compact, which provides a streamlined procedure for coordinating the placement of juveniles in different states, whether from public or private child placing agencies.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. PASSED HOUSE. Awaits transmission to the Governor for his consideration.

[HB 144](#) (Lewis-Ward-115th) Updates the rights of a ward in a guardianship by clarifying that a ward can communicate freely and privately with people other than the guardian through visitation, telephone calls, email, or personal mail. If a guardian violates the right of the ward to communicate, visit, or interact with others, in O.C.G.A. 29-4-22(b), then a ward or interested party can petition the court with evidence alleging that the guardian violated that right. If the court finds the guardian violated the ward's right, then a court can impose a maximum fine of \$1,000 for each violation. After two violations have been reported and ruled on by a court, the court can impose temporary suspension of the guardianship and appoint another guardian until the violations are resolved.)

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Children and Families Committee.

[HB 218](#) (Hilton-48th) Defines "mentally incapacitated" as a mental impairment significantly affecting a person's ability to provide personal protection, necessities, carry out daily activities, or manage resources. It establishes that statements made by mentally incapacitated individuals aged 17 or older, describing nonconsensual sexual contact or physical abuse, are admissible as evidence if the person testifies at trial and the proponent provides pretrial notice to the adverse party. However, the adverse party can waive the testimony's use, and the individual who heard the statement can be cross-examined about it during trial.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 327](#) (Cameron-1st) Includes grandparent and grandchild of the whole blood or of the half blood or step-grandchild in the list of relatives who are able to be charged with incest.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 499](#) (Hitchens-161st) Provides a court the discretion to require either one spouse, or both spouses, to pay child support for a disabled child who has become an adult but lacks the ability to take care of themselves independently. The spouses can be in a divorce proceeding, living separately, or in a state of separation. A "disabled child" is defined to be an individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities and that meets a disability under state or federal law. The bill allows for modification of the award for child support if there has been a substantial change in the child's or parent's ability to provide support for themselves. The court can direct one or both parents to maintain life insurance for the benefit of a disabled child who has become an adult but lacks the ability to take care of themselves independently.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Children and Families Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 839](#) (Dempsey-13th) Allows Georgia to enter into an interstate compact known as the "Social Work Licensure Compact" and authorizes the Georgia Composite Board of Professional Counselors, Social Workers, and Marriage and Family Therapists to administer the compact in this state.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee.

HB 910 (Jasperse-11th) Delineates various terms and regulations regarding the dissemination and access of material deemed harmful to minors on public websites by commercial entities. It defines terms such as 'commercial entity,' 'digitized identification card,' 'distribute,' 'material harmful to minors,' 'minor,' 'news-gathering organization,' 'publish,' 'reasonable age verification,' and 'substantial portion.' Commercial entities are required to implement reasonable age verification methods before allowing access to websites containing a significant amount of harmful material for minors. Failure to do so can result in liability for damages, court costs, and fines of up to \$10,000 per violation. The section also specifies that no identifying information should be retained after age verification, with penalties for non-compliance. Exclusions are made for news-related content and cloud service providers. Additionally, internet service providers are not held accountable solely for providing access to harmful material if they are not responsible for its creation or dissemination.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 993 (Powell-33rd) Creates a criminal penalty for those who groom a minor through a pattern of activity, and use electronic means to persuade, induce, entice, or coerce that minor to engage in a sexual offense, human trafficking, or any other offense within Chapter 6 of Title 16. A person who commits this crime will be subject to felony imprisonment of one to five years. This crime only applies to a person over the age of 18 and who is not within four years of age of the alleged victim.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee.

HB 1022 (Sainz-180th) "Colton-McNeill Act" - Increases penalties for committing the crime of cruelty to children against a disabled minor. The first degree of the crime now carries a penalty of between 15 and 30 years, while the second degree of the crime now carries a penalty of between 10 and 30 years.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

HB 1090 (Newton-127th) Updates and expands the Fostering Success Tax Credit for aging foster children and justice involved youth that meet one of the following: revising eligibility to include former foster children up to age 21, youth in foster care at least six months after reaching age 14 who have not been adopted or reunited with family before age 18, and youth in foster care at least six months after reaching age 14 who are homeless or qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); expanding the types of programs that can participate to include those that support justice involved youth by providing wraparound services for youth aging out of foster care enrolled in a public postsecondary educational institution, a program to obtain a high school diploma or equivalent, a nationally accredited vocational school, or participating in a registered apprenticeship program; and to allow a "business enterprise" -- defined to mean insurance companies -- to claim the credit. (Thanks to Barton Child Law and Policy Center for help with this summary.)

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Finance Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 1264 (Stephens-164th) Authorizes the Georgia Composite Board of Professional Counselors, Social Workers, and Marriage and Family Therapists and the Georgia Board of Nursing to establish a professional health program to provide for monitoring and rehabilitation of impaired healthcare professionals.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee.

HB 1361 (Thomas-21st) Outlines definitions and penalties regarding offenses related to trespassing and harassing wild animals. It defines "harassment" as any act that disregards the well-being of a wild animal or disrupts its normal behavior patterns. A "wild animal" encompasses any land or sea creature found in the wild, excluding domestic animals or livestock, even those housed in facilities for public visitation, conservation, or education. The code delineates degrees of criminal trespass involving wild animals, with first-degree offenses resulting in injury or death of the animal being a felony punishable by imprisonment for one to ten years, and second-degree offenses being misdemeanors punishable by up to 12 months' imprisonment. Offenders are liable for damages to property, including harm to the animal. The code specifies that certain defenses, like lack of sufficient guarding or provocation, are not valid excuses for trespassing or harassing wild animals. Additionally, it exempts individuals aiding others or animals in need from certain trespassing restrictions. Furthermore, the section introduces definitions pertinent to obscenity laws, such as "artificial intelligence system," "child," and "sexually explicit conduct," providing clarity for legal interpretation and enforcement.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

SB 230 (Brass-28th) Adds a new item to the bill of rights for foster parents, which says that they have the right to a reasonable and prudent parent standard when determining the ability of a child in foster care to engage in certain extracurricular activities. This clarifies that foster parents have the right to a certified volunteer advocate of the foster parent's choosing during an investigation and also during meetings, as well as the right to a fair, timely, and impartial investigation. It also changes the date that the Department of Human Services must develop a grievance procedure for dealing with grievances of foster parents from 2007 to 2024.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Juvenile Justice Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

SB 376 (Tillery-19th) Amends various Code sections related to dependency proceedings to require that a court determine whether the parent has made substantial progress towards completion of the case plan at the initial 75-day periodic review. During a review that is after an initial 75-day review, the bill requires the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) to develop a case plan within 14 days of the review. The bill would also require that the court review and adopt the revised case plan within 45 days of the review or at a previously-scheduled hearing. O.C.G.A. 15-11-232 is revised to correct a reference involving a court's written findings during a permanency plan hearing involving a child who has attained the age of 14. The bill revises O.C.G.A. 15-11-233, relating to termination of parental rights, to narrow one of the situations in which termination of parental rights may not be in the best interests of a child adjudicated as a dependent. The bill limits that situation to only include when a relative intends to be a permanent placement for that child as part of a permanency plan and in which the timeline is consistent with the developmental needs of the child. SB 376 requires the court, at least 30 days prior to the 15th month that a child has been in foster care and when the court deems appropriate, to review DFCS's determination that terminating the parental rights would not be in the best interests of the child. The court can appoint an attorney guardian ad litem who can file a petition to terminate parental rights on behalf of the child. The court is also permitted to make additional rulings at its own discretion.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Juvenile Justice Committee. The bill will be on the House floor for a vote TODAY (MONDAY).

SB 401 (Kirkpatrick-32nd) Requires each juvenile court to collect data on all cases in which a child is alleged or adjudicated to be a dependent child placed in foster care. This data will be incorporated into the Georgia Juvenile Data Exchange, and the form of entry will be specified by the Administrative Office of the Courts. This data will include various dates related to the disposition of cases and deadlines imposed by statute. The bill requires each juvenile court to maintain a "ready-accessible docket" that is accessible by the parties and to utilize its local case management system to collect required data. By April 15, 2025, the Administrative Office of the Courts must put together a report for the General Assembly. Further, a petition to terminate parental rights must be immediately filed and docketed when presented to the clerk of a juvenile court.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Juvenile Justice Committee. The bill will be on the House floor for a vote TODAY (MONDAY).

SB 454 (Strickland-17th) Revises the child support award calculation worksheet and the rates, clarifies that the definition of custodial parent applies to the parent who earns the lesser amount of gross income, and changes the process of editing child support awards to include a low-income adjustment system rather than a deviation. The bill allows disability benefits received by the child from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to count against the noncustodial parent's final child support amount.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Juvenile Justice Committee. The bill will be on the House floor for a vote TODAY (MONDAY).

SB 493 (Hatchett-50th) Section 1 of SB 493 adds a defined minimum fine of \$1,500 for the crime of intentionally photographing a minor without the consent of the parent or guardian, if the court elects to impose a fine. On a second or subsequent violation, the penalty will be a felony with imprisonment of between one and 30 years and a fine of between \$5,000 and \$100,000. A conviction will also encompass a plea of nolo contendere. Further, a person who is on the sex offender registry is prohibited from knowingly owning or operating an unmanned aircraft system with the intent to photograph or observe any person in a manner that violates that person's reasonable expectation of privacy. Section 2 allows a court to add a term of probation for someone who is subject to O.C.G.A. 42-8-35(b) that prohibits a sex offender from possessing, owning, or operating an unmanned aircraft system. Section 3 allows an individual on the sex offender registry to petition the superior court to be released from the registry when they have reached the age of 80 years old and have completed all prison, parole, supervised release, and probation for the offense that required registration. A person can also petition the superior court to be released from the registry when they: 1) were convicted and required to register under the laws of another jurisdiction and have been removed from that other jurisdiction's registry; 2) have completed all prison, parole, supervised release, and probation requirements for the offense that required registration, and 10 years have elapsed since the requirements have been met; and 3) the individual has been classified by the board as a Level I risk classification. When a person petitions the court to be removed from the registry solely on the basis that they completed all prison, parole, supervised release, and probation requirements, then they may do so if five years have elapsed since completing the requirements and if they are a Level I risk classification.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do pass by the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

SB 512 (Still-48th) Establishes a Victims of Human Trafficking Fund Commission, administratively assigned to the Division of Family and Children Services. It creates a separate fund in the state treasury for disbursements, including for care, rehabilitative services, residential housing, health services, and social services for victims. The commission, comprised of appointed members, is tasked with overseeing fund disbursements, maintaining records, and adhering to state standards. The commission is empowered to recommend changes in state programs and policies relating to the care of exploited victims, solicit federal funds and donations, and impose additional penalties for certain offenses, with funds directed to the Victims of Human Trafficking Fund. Additionally, it grants victims a cause of action against perpetrators and allows for the forfeiture of property used in the commission of related crimes, and provides for a required human trafficking training program for hotels.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee.

SB 520 (Cowser-46th) Adds definitions for "income withholding" and "income withholding notice", and replaces previous terms within the Code. It also requires that an income withholding notice be provided to the payor to initiate income withholding. In cases involving Title IV-D child support withholding through an income withholding notice, all objections will be placed on the calendar for a hearing before an administrative law judge. The notice will remain in effect until the objection is heard and a decision is rendered.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Juvenile Justice Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

HR 1214 (Reese-140th) Creates the House Study Committee on the Affordability and Accessibility of Georgia's Legitimation Process.

STATUS: House Health Committee. Passage TBD. (As a House Study Committee, the bill does not need to cross for final passage)

HR 1255 (Bell-75th) Creates the House Study Committee on Combating Human Trafficking in Major Transportation Areas.

STATUS: House Health Committee. Passage TBD. (As a House Study Committee, the bill does not need to cross for final passage)

SR 616 (Still-48th) Amends the Constitution so as to provide that the General Assembly by general law may provide for the allocation of certain additional penalties and assessments to the Victims of Human Trafficking Fund for the purpose of providing care and rehabilitative and social services to individuals in this state who have been or may be sexually exploited.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee.



Health & Behavioral Health

SB 377 (Tillery-19th) Defines and clarifies qualified residential treatment programs as a type of licensed child-caring institution.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. PASSED HOUSE. Awaits transmission to the Governor for his consideration.

HB 82 (Jackson-128th) Relating to tax credits for rural physicians, the bill subsequently creates a tax credit of up to \$5,000 for rural healthcare professionals, defined as physicians and dentists operating in a rural county. The tax credit may be claimed for up to five years for eligible professionals, provided that the healthcare professional continues operating in a rural county. The aggregate amount of the tax credit is limited to \$2 million per year.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by Substitute in the Senate Finance Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 143 (Mathis-149th) Relating to the Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce, so as to provide for the establishment of the Georgia Health Care Professionals Data System; and for collaboration with state licensing boards.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 181 (Townsend-179th) Adds the compound 7-hydroxymitragynine to the definition of "kratom." The bill limits the methods that kratom can be ingested and requires that the sale of kratom be only behind the counter in stores. Anyone violating this section is guilty of a misdemeanor. The bill requires all kratom products to be derived from the natural kratom plant. A kratom processor cannot sell or distribute a kratom product that is adulterated or contains certain compounds or substances within it. An entity that manufactures, distributes, sells, or delivers kratom must maintain a registered agent in the state. A processor who knowingly or recklessly commits an act in violation will be guilty of a high and aggravated misdemeanor as a first offense and a felony on a second or subsequent offense, with a penalty of imprisonment between one to 15 years; a maximum fine of \$100,000; or both. A processor who negligently commits an act in violation of O.C.G.A. 16-13-122 will be guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a maximum fine of \$1,000. A person who suffers injury or damages as a result of a violation of this Code section can also bring a civil action for actual damages, which are presumed to be at least \$250, together with court costs.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 215 (Powell-33rd) Establishes the Georgia Community Health Worker Certification (CHWC) Committee, detailing its composition, responsibilities, and procedures. It defines key terms such as accreditation, certification, certification programs, certified community health worker, community health worker, and core competency. The CHWC Committee comprises eleven voting members appointed by the Commissioner, representing various professional backgrounds related to healthcare and public health policy, along with two agency representatives as nonvoting members. Members are subject to specific eligibility criteria and term limits, with provisions for reimbursement of expenses. The Committee is tasked with setting standards for accreditation and certification programs, assessing community health worker competency, facilitating reciprocity for certified workers from other jurisdictions, establishing disciplinary procedures, and ensuring compliance with public health standards. All certification programs must be accredited by the CHWC Committee, with the Department overseeing the process and providing necessary administrative support. Applicants seeking accreditation must fulfill specified requirements and pay a designated fee. Additionally, the Department is mandated to publish accreditation criteria and application procedures on its website to ensure transparency and accessibility.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 362 (Mathiak-74th) Requires benefit providers to provide a written account of payments and reimbursements for services to treating providers upon 30 days of a request being made.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 441 (Dempsey-13th) Defines terms such as "authorizing dentist," "dental hygienist," and "teledentistry," providing clarity on their roles and responsibilities within the context of remote dental care. Provides that licensed dentists intending to practice teledentistry must adhere to stringent requirements including establishing formal referral relationships with in-state dentists and notifying the board of their intent to practice teledentistry. Dentists must also ensure informed consent from patients, emphasizing the limitations of remote care compared to traditional in-person examinations. The code also delineates the role of dental hygienists in teledentistry. Dental hygienists must be licensed and in good standing, meeting specific requirements to perform dental hygiene functions permitted under general supervision. The bill also mandates that health insurance plans cover teledentistry services as directed by Department of Insurance regulations. Insurers are prohibited from excluding such services or imposing additional costs based solely on their mode of delivery. Enforcement of these regulations falls under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Insurance, who is empowered to ensure compliance by health insurers with the provisions related to teledentistry coverage. Furthermore, the code empowers the Board to promulgate rules and regulations necessary for the effective implementation of teledentistry practices, providing guidance and standardization for practitioners statewide, including dental hygienists.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee. The bill will be on the Senate floor for a vote TODAY (MONDAY).

HB 546 (Jasperse-11th) Amends the definition of "pharmacy care" within the 'Georgia Pharmacy Practice Act' to allow for adaption of a prescription drug order. The bill allows a pharmacist to adapt a prescription drug order, under certain circumstances, by changing the quantity of medication prescribed, changing the dosage form of the prescription, and completing missing information on a prescription drug order. Adaptions must be documented and done with patient consent.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 557 (Stephens-164th) The bill authorizes advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants to prescribe hydrocodone, oxycodone, or their compounds in emergency situations, provided they maintain good standing with the relevant medical board and possess at least one year of post-licensure clinical experience. Patients receiving such prescriptions must be at least 18 years old, with the initial prescription limited to a five-day supply. Authorization for this practice must be incorporated into the provider's nurse protocol agreement or physician assistant's job description. Additionally, the bill permits licensed chiropractors, advanced practice registered nurses, and physician assistants to provide affidavits for individuals with disabilities to obtain temporary, permanent, or special permanent parking permits. It includes provisions safeguarding healthcare professionals seeking mental health or wellness services, ensuring their participation is not reported to licensing boards unless they are deemed unfit to practice or pose a danger. Evaluators of the program will enjoy immunity from civil liability under certain circumstances, and their findings will not be admissible in civil actions. Furthermore, the bill prohibits hospitals or hospital systems from imposing or enforcing restrictive covenants against staff in cases of permanent closure or acquisition resulting in reduced compensation.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. PASSED SENATE. Awaits transmission to the governor for his consideration.

[HB 576](#) (Gullett-19th) Prohibits an individual's vaccine status from being used to determine priority status on an organ transplant waiting list.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

[HB 663](#) (Hatchett-155th) Outlines provisions regarding designated essential caregivers, visitors, and visitation policies in hospitals and long-term care facilities. A designated essential caregiver, appointed by a patient, guardian, or legal representative, is permitted to assist with personal needs and activities, with certain restrictions and adherence to facility policies. Hospitals and long-term care facilities are mandated to allow designated essential caregivers for minors and adults, subject to compliance with safety protocols and rules. However, access may be limited in certain areas or situations, and facilities reserve the right to suspend or terminate access based on various grounds, including noncompliance and safety risks. Additionally, facilities can establish visitation policies to manage visitor access, with considerations for medical necessity, patient care, and safety. The article emphasizes the rights of patients and residents, prohibiting the waiver or suspension of these rights, and mandates the posting of informational materials explaining these rights on facility websites. Furthermore, it prohibits state agencies from penalizing facilities for allowing visitor or caregiver access, except in cases of gross negligence or intentional harm, and exempts facilities from penalties for failure to comply with certain federal guidelines regarding visitation restrictions.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 793](#) (Barton-5th) Allows an applicant for a license in social work who is enrolled in the last semester of their master's degree program for social work to sit for the master's social work licensing examination.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee.

[HB 872](#) (Hawkins-27th) Allows for dental students to be eligible for the service cancelable loan program when they agree to practice in rural counties with a population of 50,000 or less.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 874](#) (Hawkins-27th) Requires all public schools to always have a functional automated external defibrillator (AED) on site during school hours and during any school-related function. Each school will ensure that the following requirements are met: designate an internal response team; ensure that all internal response team members and any other expected users receive training; ensure that emergency medical services are aware of the AED's location; ensure the AED is maintained/tested appropriately; ensure involvement of a licensed physician for training, notifications, and maintenance; establish a written emergency action plan; and conduct a minimum of two emergency action practice drills each school year.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Education and Youth Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 924](#) (Ballinger-23rd) Prohibits insurance companies from requiring the practice of "white bagging" by in-network providers for certain specialty medications. "White bagging" is the practice of requiring that these drugs be purchased through third-party pharmacies.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Industry and Labor Committee.

[HB 991](#) (Blackmon-146th) Extends the sunset provision on the Hospital Medicaid Financing Program from 2025 to 2030.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. The bill will be on the Senate floor for a vote TODAY (MONDAY).

[HB 1028](#) (LaHood-171st) Clarifies certain rules/regulations relating to the Department of Public Health including adding certain conditions to the definition of sexually transmitted diseases, adding opioid antagonists and post-exposure prophylaxis drugs to the commissioner's standing order, and removing certain outdated code sections.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. The bill will be on the Senate floor for a vote TODAY (MONDAY).

[HB 1035](#) (Cooper-45th) Allows for the sale and supply of opioid antagonists in vending machines. Additionally, persons and harm reduction organizations that dispense, supply, and administer opioid antagonists are immune from liability when acting in good faith.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

[HB 1077](#) (Cooper-45th) Creates a student loan repayment program for behavioral health providers. Eligible providers include but are not limited to licensed psychiatrists, addiction medicine specialists, psychologists, social workers, professional counselors, and marriage/family therapists. Repayment can be received for up to six years, and annual amounts range from \$10,000 to \$50,000 depending on the share of Medicaid patients seen. Total repayment may not exceed \$220,000. The Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce is also required to sponsor clinical behavioral health training programs at eligible institutions.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee.

[HB 1104](#) (Crawford-84th) Requires athletic associations to post on their website guidelines and relevant materials informing and educating students, parents/guardians, school personnel, and coaches about screening for mental health risks and available resources. Coaches will annually view approved educational videos, if available, and review guidelines/materials related to mental health risks in student athletes.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Education and Youth Committee.

[HB 1170](#) (Hawkins-27th) Requires that government buildings, courthouses, and schools with automated external defibrillators provide opioid antagonists to assist in the event of an opioid overdose. The bill also bans providers from offering medicines that temporarily pause puberty to Georgians under the age of 18.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

[HB 1183](#) (Dempsey-13th) Requires local school systems to provide certain information to parents and guardians of students in grades six through 12 on Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes whenever other health information is provided.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Education and Youth Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 1260](#) (Gaines-120th) Requires the Commissioner of Agriculture to establish and maintain a directory of nicotine vapor products authorized for sale in this state; and prohibits the sale of any nicotine vapor product not listed in the directory. The bill also provides for compliance checks, civil penalties and enforcement and rules and regulations. The bill also requires the Commissioner to provide an annual report to the General Assembly.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee.

[HB 1314](#) (Romman-97th) Designates emergency medical services, including ambulance service, as an essential service.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

[HB 1322](#) (Cannon-172nd) Regulates consumable hemp products; and requires such products be packaged in certain containers. The bill also puts restrictions on advertisements of such products, on the location of retail establishments that sell such products.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee.

HB 1339 (Parrish-158th) Modifies and updates statutes relating to the state's certificate of need (CON) processes. The Department of Community Health (DCH) is required to review and update the state health plan every five years. The time period to submit a letter of intent is reduced from 30 to 25 days before application submission. The 120-day period for DCH to review the application begins upon receipt of the application and within 30 days of receipt, an applicant will be provided an opportunity to meet and review with DCH. Opposition is required to be submitted within 30 days of the receipt of the application. Additionally, expenditure thresholds for the construction, remodeling, and installation of capital projects are removed. HB 1339 expands several provisions relating to CON exemptions. The allowable period for a closed hospital to be repurposed without a CON is extended from 12 to 24 months. The expansion of hospital bed capacity is increased to 10 beds or 20 percent within a three-year period when the occupancy rate exceeds 60 percent for the previous 12 months is exempt. The maximum distance for certain healthcare facilities to relocate without a CON is extended from a three-mile radius to a five mile radius of the original location. Psychiatric or substance abuse inpatient programs or beds for Medicaid and uninsured patients are now exempt when an agreement is reached with a nearby hospital. New or expanded rural hospital-based obstetric services are exempt. Acute care facilities in rural counties are exempt under certain circumstances. Transfers of existing beds and services are exempt when they occur within the same hospital system and are within a 10-mile radius of the original campus, provided the exemption has not been used in the prior 24 months. Noncompliance is addressed in Section 6 of HB 1339. Failure to meet one or more requirements for exemption will result in a monetary penalty. Repeated failure to pay fines or produce data leads to the revocation of exemption. Penalties associated with delayed or unsubmitted reports are increased from \$500 to \$2,000 per day up to 30 days and from \$1,000 to \$5,000 per day for every day after 30 days. DCH and the General Assembly's Office of Legislative Counsel will review and make recommendations to update and rewrite Title 31, Chapter 6 and other such provisions relating to CON in consultation with relevant stakeholders. Recommendations will be made to the General Assembly by December 1, 2024. The DCH commissioner will approve proportional donations to an individual rural hospital if the contribution exceeds the yearly maximum contribution amount. The maximum limit on the rural hospital tax credit is increased from \$75 million to \$100 million per taxable year and the sunset is extended from December 31, 2024 to December 31, 2029. HB 1339 creates the Comprehensive Health Coverage Commission, which will advise the General Assembly, governor, and DCH on matters related to the quality of and access to healthcare by low income and uninsured populations, including reimbursement, funding, quality improvement, and service delivery enhancement opportunities. The commission will consist of nine members including a chairperson appointed by the governor, four non-legislative members appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, and four non-legislative members appointed by the president of the Senate. The commission's initial report will be submitted no later than December 1, 2024 and the commission will be abolished on December 31, 2026. The Senate has passed this bill with changes, including provisions which could allow Morehouse School of Medicine to open a hospital in central Atlanta that could provide services once offered by Atlanta Medical Center, and allow a hospital to open without a permit in any rural county where a prior hospital has been closed for over a year. The bill also includes a study committee to examine whether Georgia's state-federal Medicaid program should expand. It allows physicians from different specialties to share operating rooms (thus one building can be used for any procedure) and abolishes requirements for permits for outpatient birthing centers and imaging centers. New hospitals may be built in counties with less than 50,000 residents, as long as they agree to provide a certain amount of charity care, join the statewide trauma system and provide comprehensive behavioral health services. The bill is likely to go to conference committee for the chambers to work out their differences.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. PASSED SENATE. The bill awaits approval from the House to the Senate changes.

HB 1344 (Dempsey-13th) Revises provisions related to the Behavioral Health Coordinating Council. The commissioners of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Department of Early Care and Learning, Department of Community Health, Department of Public Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Corrections, Department of Community Supervision, Department of Community Affairs, Technical College System of Georgia, Department of Labor, and the State School Superintendent will be authorized to attend or send a delegate to attend meetings. The Georgia Composite Board of Professional Counselors, Social Workers, and Marriage and Family Therapists can waive experience requirements for licensure applicants from other jurisdictions when their license is in good standing for at least two years. The bill also repeals the requirement for the Commissioner of DBHDD to submit an annual report to the Governor and various legislative bodies that includes a copy of the State Plan for the Coordinated System of Care and various information on severely and emotionally disturbed children and adolescents receiving services from DBHDD, DOE, or other state agencies.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 1409 (Leverett-123rd) Pertains to the legal liability of inpatient mental health providers in the delivery of care to individuals under the age of 21 and are in Department of Human Services (DHS) or determined by DHS to be in need of mental health care. Mental health care providers will not be held liable unless there is clear and convincing evidence of gross negligence. In such cases, the jury will be instructed to consider the patient's medical history, previous provider-patient relationships, and circumstances surrounding delivery of services.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

HB 1490 (Newton-127th) Prohibits the enforcement of certain covenants and restrictions on physicians in employment or partnership contracts or agreements and delineates covenants not to compete which are valid and enforceable.

STATUS: House Hopper

SB 32 (Anavitarte-31st) "Alyssa's Law" - Provides for the care of students being treated for epilepsy or a seizure disorder. A school nurse or other school employee should be trained in the proper protocols should a student experience a seizure while at school. The parent or guardian must annually supply the school with a seizure action plan which provides specific directions about what to do in emergency situations.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Education Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

SB 76 (Merritt-9th) Requires state health benefit plans to cover insulin medication at an amount not to exceed \$35.00 per 30 day supply or \$105.00 per 90 day supply.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Health Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

- [SB 293](#) (Watson-1st) Clarifies that the Commissioner appoints a District Health Director (DHD) to serve as the CEO of each local health department in a district, and the county board of health vote to approve the selection of a DHD is by majority vote; and allows the DHD to be a non-physician, as long as a physician serves as the chief medical officer to oversee the clinical programs of the health department. DHDs that are physicians, may serve as both the DHD and CMO. The bill also explains that the Commissioner can select an interim DHD if there is vacancy, without county board of health approval until a permanent DHD is appointed and approved by a vote of the county boards of health.
- STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Public Health Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.*
- [SB 307](#) (Kirkpatrick-32nd) Insurers employing prior authorization requirements must establish a program allowing for selective reduction in these requirements based on healthcare providers' performance and adherence to evidence-based medicine, aiming to enhance healthcare quality and affordability while reducing administrative burdens. The insurer has discretion in determining participation criteria for healthcare providers and services in the program but must submit a detailed filing to the department outlining the program's narrative, participation criteria, covered procedures, provider count, and other necessary information. By July 1, 2025, insurers must submit this filing annually in accordance with regulations set by the Commissioner.
- STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Insurance Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.*
- [SB 373](#) (Walker-20th) Provides for the issuance of expedited licenses by endorsement for marriage and family therapists.
- STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Regulated Industries Committee.*
- [SB 395](#) (Dixon-45th) Wesley's Law', allows for visitors and school employees to possess and administer an opioid antagonist if the person believes someone is suffering from a drug overdose on school property or at a school-sponsored activity. No cause of action can be brought whether a school personnel administers or chooses not to administer an opioid antagonist when this decision is brought in good faith.
- STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Education Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.*
- [SB 455](#) (Strickland-17th) Requires the acceptance of payment for health care items or services regardless of when authorization is obtained. Additionally, SB 455 requires reimbursement to an independent pharmacy be no less than the average reimbursement for chain pharmacies.
- STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Health Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.*
- [SB 460](#) (Dixon-45th) Revises provisions relating to the number of advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants that a physician can authorize and supervise at any one time.
- STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Regulated Industries Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).*

[SB 480](#) (Hodges-3rd) Provides student loan repayment to mental health and substance use providers who provide services to underserved youth or who practice in an unserved geographic area. The total amount of repayment will be determined by the Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce and will be paid for a maximum of five years.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Public Health Committee. The bill will be on the House floor for a vote TODAY (MONDAY).

[SB 495](#) (Watson-1st) Relating to the Low THC Oil Patient Registry, so as to provide for the term of validity of a registration card.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Regulated Industries Committee.

[HR 1283](#) (Powell-33rd) Creates the House Study Committee on Safety and Consumer Protection of Nicotine Vapor Products.

STATUS: Recommended Do Pass by the House Health Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

[HR 1360](#) (Dempsey-13th) Creates the House Study Committee on Alternatives to Opioids for Pain Management.

STATUS: House Health Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

Maternal & Infant Care

[HB 1037](#) (Daniel-117th) Creates the Georgia Commission on Maternal and Infant Health to make policy recommendations regarding perinatal care programs and develop quality metrics. The commission will consist of 14 members with six appointed by the governor, three by the lieutenant governor, and three by the speaker of the House of Representatives. The commissioner of the Department of Public Health and chief executive officer of the Georgia Research Alliance will also serve as members. A report of findings and recommendations is due on July 1, 2026 and the commission will be repealed.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

[HB 1497](#) (Anulewicz-42nd) Provides that a human egg or human embryo is not considered an unborn child, a minor child, or a person for any purpose under law.

STATUS: House Hopper

[HR 1231](#) (Newton-127th) Creates the House Study Committee on Trauma, Maternal, Prenatal, and Pediatric Care Access and Funding.

STATUS: House Health Committee.



Early Childhood Education & Out-of-School Time

[SB 360](#) (Hickman-4th) Provide that capital outlay funds may be used for educational facilities for voluntary pre-kindergarten programs provided by the school system; and that student projection counts may include pre-kindergarten.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Education Committee.

[SB 386](#) (Dixon-45th) Provides for the regulation and taxation of sports betting in this state and increases funding to the state's Pre-K programs.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Higher Education Committee.

[SR 471](#) (Albers-56th) Creates the Senate Study Committee on Access to Affordable Child Care (including for school-age children).

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. This is a Senate Study Committee and therefore does not need House approval.

[SR 587](#) (Dixon-45th) Recognizes February 14, 2024, as Afterschool Day at the state capitol.

STATUS: SENATE ADOPTED.



K-12 Education

[HB 318](#) (Hilton-48th) The legislative update encompasses several significant changes. Firstly, it involves the reestablishment of the Office of Charter School Compliance and the establishment of the Office of District Flexibility. These offices aim to streamline the administration and oversight of charter schools within the state's education system. Secondly, the bill mandates that administrative fees withheld by the state or local school systems for charter school administration must be exclusively utilized for that purpose. Up to three percent of charter school funding can be retained by local boards of education for administrative services, with any unused funds required to be remitted to the charter school annually. The Department of Education is also authorized to retain up to 3% for the administration of state-chartered special schools, with any remaining funds to be returned to the respective schools. Moreover, the legislation revises the eligibility criteria for project-specific capital outlay grants for low-wealth school systems, taking into account factors such as revenue rankings and the age of educational facilities. Additionally, it empowers the State Board of Education to establish rules and regulations to implement the provisions outlined in the bill. Lastly, the update includes changes to the definitions of energy cost savings measures and contracts, reflecting adjustments in terminology and scope within the energy efficiency sector.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. PASSED SENATE. House agreed to Senate changes so the bill awaits transmission to the Governor for his consideration.

[HB 995](#) (Bonner-73rd) Requires local school systems to provide an optional nationally recognized multiple-aptitude battery assessment to predict future academic and occupational success in the military to students in grades 11 and 12. This assessment will be provided to students during school hours at least once a school year.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. PASSED SENATE. Awaits transmission to the governor for his consideration.

HB 282 (Mainor-56th) Clarifies that the career course that the State Board of Education must prescribe for grades six through 12 must be a career readiness course, focusing on instruction and training experiences. The bill requires the Department of Education to assemble and develop resources and materials regarding career readiness and employability, and to make those resources available to state public schools. The minimum course of study must be ready for implementation by July 1, 2024.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Education and Youth Committee.

HB 579 (Barrett-24th) Relating to the 'Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Act' to allow students who previously qualified for the scholarship to remain eligible throughout the students' education. HB 579 requires the Department of Education to electronically deposit payments into the accounts of participating schools.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Education and Youth Committee.

HB 970 (Dickey-145th) The bill expands the eligibility criteria for the Realizing Educational Achievement Can Happen (REACH) scholarship program to include victims of human trafficking. Under HB 970, REACH participating school systems are empowered to designate REACH scholars annually, pending available appropriations. It mandates that participating school systems allocate \$1,000 and have the authority to provide an additional \$9,000 for each REACH scholar enrolled in their system.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Higher Education Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 987 (Cannon-172nd) The term "qualified local school system" is amended to reduce the minimum required millage rate or effective millage rate from 14 to 10 mills beginning July 1, 2024. School systems that receive equalization must meet these requirements or risk a 25 percent midterm adjustment of the initial equalization grant amount.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Education and Youth Committee.

HB 1122 (Hilton-48th) Provides for funding requirements for superintendents and principals for local and state charter schools and allows part-time employees who work at least 20 hours per week to have their children attend the charter school. The bill also clarifies conflicts of interest around who can serve on state and charter boards. It was amended by the Senate committee to clarify that local charter schools, system charter schools, and college and career academies that are charter schools are defined in the bill as they already are in state law. The bill also added language which requires the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) to work with GaDOE to establish a single numerical score on a scale of 0-100 for public schools and school systems that must be published on the GOSA website, GaDOE website, school system website, and the school website if one exists. (Thanks to GSBA for help with the summary!)

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Education and Youth Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 1452 (Gaines-120th) Establishes criteria for GaDOE in determining eligibility for state-funded special education programs, with a maximum age limit set to gradually increase from 22 years for the 2024-2025 school year to 30 years by the 2032-2033 school year and beyond. Individuals who meet these criteria will remain eligible for the remainder of the current school year, regardless of their date of birth. Additionally, individuals over the age of 23 seeking eligibility must have been enrolled and reported by a public school in Georgia during the two most recent full-time equivalent (FTE) program counts.

STATUS: House Education Committee, but since the bill was dropped after Crossover Day, it will not advance as its own bill.

SB 50 (Burns-23rd) Requires the State Board of Education to create content standards in lifeguard and aquatic safety beginning in the 2026-2027 school year. Local boards of education may adopt curriculum and provide instruction in lifeguarding and aquatic safety. Curriculum should provide sufficient training to allow students to successfully complete certification as a lifeguard upon course completion.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. PASSED HOUSE. The bill needs agreement to House changes from the Senate.

SB 105 (Walker-20th) Revises the minimum and maximum allowable benefit multiplier for current and future retiree retirement benefits payable upon normal, early, or delayed retirement in the Public School Employees Retirement System.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Retirement Committee.

SB 147 (Still-48th) "Boundless Opportunities for Georgia Students Act" - Permits student transfers between local school systems without contracts between the local school system where the student resides and the local school system where the student seeks to enroll.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Education Committee.

SB 202 (Rahman-5th) Provides for the GaDOE to establish and study a pilot program of outdoor learning spaces on elementary and secondary school property in order to determine whether and how to implement best practices and design standards for outdoor learning spaces.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Education Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

SB 208 (Dolezal-27th) Allows each local board of education of a high growth school system to, by resolution, impose, levy, and collect educational development impact fees within any area of such school system with a total increase in student enrollment of 20% or more during the immediately preceding ten-year period.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Governmental Affairs Committee.

SB 233 (Dolezal-27th) Creates the Georgia Education Savings Authority and the 'Georgia Promise Scholarship Act'; changes program weights in the Quality Basic Education formula; allows capital outlays funds to be used for pre-kindergarten programs; caps tuition fees for out of district student transfers; revises grants to low-performing schools; and amends the tax credit for qualified education donations. PART I Section 1-1 creates the Georgia Education Savings Authority to establish and administer student assistance programs. The powers, duties, functions, and organization of the authority are outlined in the newly created Title 20, Chapter 2B, Article 1. PART II Section 2-1 creates the 'Georgia Promise Scholarship Act', which would provide \$6,500 per student to families for qualified education-related expenses outside of the public school system. Qualified education expenses include: tuition at a participating school; tutoring; purchase of curriculum; professional services; transportation; fees for the management of account funds; other expenses authorized by the State Board of Education or the Georgia Education Savings Authority; or individual education expenses authorized by the parent review committee under Code Section 20-2B25. Funds will go into an account controlled by a parent to be used for qualified education expenses. In order to allow parents and taxpayers to measure the achievements of this program, students participating must take nationally norm-referenced tests that measure student academic progress in math and language arts or a state-wide assessment annually. The Education Savings Authority will report annually to the General Assembly on the number and demographics of participating students and schools; student performance on assessments; parental satisfaction; percent of funds utilized for each qualified education expenses; and the fiscal impact of the program on the state and school systems. PART III Section 3-1 revises the weights under the Quality Basic Education formula for instructional programs. Section 3-2 amends O.C.G.A. 20-2-260(5), relating to capital outlay funds, to include Georgia's prekindergarten programs provided and operated by the local school system to be included as an allowable use. School systems are currently unable to use capital outlay funds for this purpose. PART IV Section 4-1 amends O.C.G.A. 20-2-293 relating to a student attending a school in a system other than the system of the student's residence. Beginning July 1, 2026, if a student attends a school outside of the student's local school system, the new school system cannot charge more than the local share of funding for tuition to transfer students. PART V Section 5-1 amends the Georgia Foundation for Public Education to provide that schools in the lowest 25 percent of schools should be prioritized to receive funding to implement academic and organizational innovations to improve student achievement. Section 5-2 increases the maximum allowable income tax credit for individuals and businesses for qualified education donations for grants to public schools. The tax credit cap will increase from \$5 million in 2023 to \$15 million in 2024.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. PASSED HOUSE. The bill awaits agreement from the Senate to the changes the House made in order to progress.

SB 405 (Dixon-45th) Lowers the age of eligibility from 18 to 16 for certain students to be enrolled in a completion special school.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Education Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

SB 440 (Brass-28th) Known as the Accelerated Career Diploma program, to simplify the dual enrollment program and allow for academic flexibility to better align with pathway programs. This diploma path is only available for an associate degree for applied science within the Technical College System of Georgia. The Dual Enrollment ACE (Accelerated Career Education) grant program creates a grant for students participating in the Accelerated Career Diploma program. These students will not be subject to the 30-hour dual enrollment cap and will allow dual enrollment funding to distinguish between academic and technical students. The sunset for this program is June 30, 2027.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Education Committee. The bill will be on the House floor for a vote TODAY (MONDAY).

SB 464 (Dixon-45th) Revises the 'Georgia Early Literacy Act' to provide for the identification of up to five universal reading screeners by the Department of Education and Georgia Council on Literacy, one of which will be free to local school systems, for use by public schools and local school systems. Section 2 establishes the 'School Supplies for Educators Act' to provide financial/technical assistance to educators to purchase school supplies online subject to appropriations.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Education Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

SB 582 (Harrell-40th) Requires the State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Community Affairs and the Board of Community Affairs, to establish standards for building inspection and code enforcement. The State Board of Education is granted authority to adopt policies, rules, regulations, or guidelines to implement these standards. Local boards of education or other public school governing bodies are required to develop building inspection plans, coordinate joint inspections with relevant authorities, and report findings to the Department of Education using provided forms. They must also cooperate with state and local authorities involved in code enforcement activities following the established standards. The Department of Education is responsible for promulgating reporting forms, providing technical assistance for implementation, and ensuring compliance through corrective action if necessary.

STATUS: Senate Education and Youth Committee

SR 189 (Dolezal-27th) Constitutional Amendment for enabling legislation (SB 208) that provides that the General Assembly may by general law authorize local boards of education to impose, levy, and collect development impact fees and use the proceeds to pay for a share of the cost of additional educational facilities.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Governmental Affairs Committee.

SR 692 (Williams-25th) Creates the Senate Transporting Students Safely Study Committee.

STATUS: Senate Education and Youth Committee. This is a Senate Study Committee and therefore does not need House approval.



Higher Education

HB 130 (Gambill-15th) Establishes a student loan repayment program for eligible full-time peace officers. The total repayment amount must not exceed \$20,000 or the total student debt amount, whichever is less. Payments will be paid in annual installments for a period not exceeding five years. The Georgia Student Finance Authority is authorized to establish rules and regulations to implement the program, and the program is contingent upon appropriation of funds by the General Assembly.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. PASSED SENATE. House agreed to Senate changes so the bill awaits transmission to the Governor for his consideration.

HB 982 (Gambill-15th) Authorizes the State Workforce Development Board to develop and approve a high-demand career list.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. PASSED SENATE. Awaits transmission to the governor for his consideration.

HB 56 (Petrea-166th) Expands eligibility for the Public Safety Memorial Grant to include spouses of law enforcement officers, firefighters, or prison guards who have died in the line of duty.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Higher Education Committee.

HB 130 (Gambill-15th) Establishes a student loan repayment program for eligible full-time peace officers. The total repayment amount must not exceed \$20,000 or the total student debt amount, whichever is less. Payments will be paid in annual installments for a period not exceeding five years. The Georgia Student Finance Authority is authorized to establish rules and regulations to implement the program, and the program is contingent upon appropriation of funds by the General Assembly.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. PASSED SENATE. House agreed to Senate changes so the bill awaits transmission to the Governor for his consideration.

HB 185 (Gaines-120th) The bill originally provided for the establishment of Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) grants. As amended by the Senate, the bill establishes definitions and reporting obligations concerning funding received by the university system from foreign sources. It delineates terms such as "foreign adversary," encompassing specific countries like China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Russia, and the Maduro Regime, and defines "foreign entity of concern" and "foreign individual of concern" based on their affiliations with listed countries. The term "funding" is broadly defined to include various monetary exchanges. According to the Code, the university system is mandated to submit a detailed quarterly report to designated officials, disclosing any funding received from foreign adversaries, entities of concern, or individuals of concern. The report should specify the amount and type of funding, provide descriptions of the funding sources, including names and addresses, and include copies of associated contracts or agreements. Additionally, it must detail the purpose of the funding and indicate whether it was a one-time event or part of a series of funding events. However, the Code section does not require reporting of funding provided by individuals or families as tuition payments for students affiliated with or attending University System of Georgia programs, classes, or courses of study. Overall, the Code aims to enhance transparency regarding foreign funding within the university system, ensuring clear documentation and disclosure of such financial transactions.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Higher Education Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 985 (Martin-49th) Abolishes the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation and transfers any obligations, liabilities, or assets to the Georgia Student Finance Authority. The bill also eliminates provisions that caused suspension of various licensure due to being in default on loans for higher education. The bill also changes some provisions within the GA Student Finance Authority and regarding loans for higher education.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. PASSED SENATE. The bill awaits approval from the House to the Senate changes.

HB 1124 (Martin-49th) Extends the sunset provision of the Needs-based scholarship from 2025 to 2027 and changes the eligibility requirements from 80% to 70% of the credit requirements toward the credential of his or her program of study, if such program is a four-year program; or 45% of the credit requirements toward the credential of his or her program of study, if such program is a two-year program.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Higher Education Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 1231 (Holcomb-81st) Allows students who are concurrently seeking a baccalaureate degree and a first professional degree, and students who meet achievement standards and commence a graduate program at an eligible institution within 18 months of earning a baccalaureate degree, to use the full number of hours of HOPE scholarship eligibility.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Higher Education Committee.

SB 112 (Anavitate-31st) Creates the 'Workforce EXCEleration Act', which provides for a pilot program to establish a high school diploma program for adult learners. The program will be facilitated by the State Board of the Technical College System of Georgia. The pilot program must include at least two distinct programs and will be automatically repealed on June 30, 2029.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Higher Education Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

SB 137 (Burns-23rd) Establishes two categories of approved schools for Tuition Equalization Grant (TEG) eligibility: approved nonproprietary schools and approved proprietary schools. The bill requires an award amount not to exceed 150 percent of the regular TEG award for eligible students enrolled in a program of study directly related to a job or career field identified by the State Workforce Development Board.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Higher Education Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

SB 385 (Williams-25th) Allows Georgia Military College to offer specified bachelor degree programs only to students enrolled in the Georgia Military Global Online Leadership College (GOLC). The bill requires Georgia Military College to submit an annual report on the success or failure of all offered bachelor degree programs.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Higher Education Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

SB 399 (Echols-49th) Requires the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) commissioner to collaborate with the University System of Georgia (USG) chancellor to provide a report on specified information related to courses, transfers, degree completion, and the High-Demand Career List to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the House of Representatives, and certain legislative committee chairs. The bill provides expectations to the Board of Regents, units of USG, and local boards of education to enter into and amend agreements with TCSG related to transferability of credits.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Higher Education Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

SB 469 (Esteves-6th) Revises the maximum account balance allowed related to contributions to savings trust accounts for higher education expenses. The bill increases the income tax deduction cap related to higher education savings trust account contributions.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Higher Education Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

SB 497 (Hickman-4th) Redesignates the High-demand Career Initiatives Program as the High Demand Apprenticeship Program. The bill lowers the maximum contract completion award amount from \$10,000 per apprentice to \$5,000 per apprentice, and increases the number of allowable apprentices from five per year to 10 per year. The bill establishes the Public Service Apprenticeship Program through the Office of Workforce Development in order to promote the creation and expansion of registered apprenticeship programs throughout the state.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Higher Education Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

SB 581 (Harrell-40th) Provides for the election by a postsecondary education institution to allow concealed handguns upon campus and requires firearms safety training in order to carry handguns upon such campuses. The bill also requires storage for handguns at areas upon campus where carrying of a handgun is prohibited by law.

STATUS: Senate Judiciary Committee

HR 1384 (Blackmon-146th) Creates the House Study Committee on Assessing the Semester and Quarter Systems at USG and TCSG Institutions.

STATUS: House Higher Education Committee

SR 770 (Harrell-40th) Creates the Senate Higher Education in Prison Study Committee.

STATUS: Senate Higher Education Committee

SR 787 (Dixon-45th) Creates the Senate University Admissions Study Committee.

STATUS: Senate Rules Committee

Environmental Safety

HB 348 (Collins-71st) Requires warning signs for traffic safety enforcement devices and school zone speed limit reduction to display flashing yellow lights while the speed reduction is in effect. The speed limit may be enforced 30 minutes prior to and 30 minutes after the school starts; 30 minutes prior to and 30 minutes after the school dismisses unless the school campus is bisected by a highway; and when the driver is 10 miles per hour over the speed limit. When a citation is issued, the driver will receive an assigned hearing date that must be within 60 days of issuance of the citation. If a penalty is unpaid 30 days after a final notice has been mailed, the vehicle's registration cannot be renewed until the penalty and late fees have been collected. The bill requires an assigned hearing date to be issued with a citation for improperly overtaking a school bus. Registration of the vehicle cannot be renewed until the penalty and late fees are collected. Most provisions of the old HB 301 were included in this bill as well. These increase penalties for overtaking a school bus.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Public Safety Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 971 (Newton-127th) Allows a taxpayer to claim a tax credit of up to \$300 for eligible expenses related to firearm safe handling instructional courses and firearm secure storage devices. The tax credit will have an annual aggregate cap of \$3 million, and an individual taxpayer may only receive credits totaling \$300 in their lifetime from this program. Any unused tax credit cannot be carried forward.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Finance Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

SB 340 (Kirkpatrick-32nd) Exempts sales of firearm safes and firearm safety devices from sales and use taxes.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Ways and Means Committee

SB 351 (Anavitate-31st) Requires local boards of education to adopt, implement, and enforce social media policies; and authorizes the Attorney General and the Department of Education to consult with and assist local boards of education in the development and implementation of such policies. Additionally, the bill requires social media platforms to provide certain information to parents upon request; and gives enforcement authority to the Attorney General. The bill alters various provisions of the cyberbullying code.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Education Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

SB 402 (Ginn-47th) Allows those with intermediate driver's licenses (Class D licenses) to drive Class C vehicles (i.e., vehicles designed to carry sixteen or more passengers (including the driver), or used to transport hazardous materials in quantities that require a placard) on roads and streets but not on highways. The bill also allows such driver to have one non-family passenger in the Class C vehicle.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Motor Vehicles Committee.

SB 406 (Dixon-45th) Establishes a grant program to fund the creation of school mapping data for inclusion in the state-wide first responder building mapping information system and provides for standards for school mapping data.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

Shelter & Nutrition

HB 404 (Carpenter-4th) Requires that rental properties are fit for human habitation. The bill includes cooling as a utility that cannot be shut off prior to an eviction action. Landlords are prohibited from requiring a security deposit that exceeds two months' rent. A tenant, when they fail to pay charges owed to landlord, is afforded a three-business day written notice period prior to an eviction proceeding being filed. The eviction notice will be posted conspicuously on the property door in a sealed envelope and delivered via any methods agreed to in the rental agreement.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee. (Note that the effective date was amended in committee, so should the bill pass the Senate, it will need agreement from the House)

[HB 1017](#) (Seabaugh-34th) The bill creates the offense of unlawful squatting when he or she enters upon the land or premises of another and resides on such land or premises for any period of time knowingly acting without the knowledge or consent of the owner, rightful occupant, or an authorized representative of the owner. For purposes of this Code section, the term 'resides' means to inhabit or live on or within any land or premises.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 1034](#) (Franklin-160th) Designates the fourth Friday in November of each year as "National Sugarcane Syrup Day", because, frankly, why not? The bill also seeks to place upon the grounds of the state capitol building and upon the 44 grounds outside the state archives building a marker which commemorates the patriots of 45 the Revolutionary War.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 1048](#) (Carpenter-4th) Designates cornbread as the official state bread...AND establishes the 'Georgia State-wide Music Office Act.'

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 1073](#) (Washburn-144th) Repeals hearing and notice provisions relating to zoning decisions for halfway houses, drug rehabilitation centers, or drug dependency treatment centers.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate State and Local Governmental Operations Committee.

[HB 1182](#) (Crowe-118th) Changes Georgia's Housing Tax Credit (HTC) program so that it would only be an 80% reduction in taxes except for certain "targeted community projects" which would remain eligible for the 100% match. (Georgia HTC program allows private for-profit and nonprofit organizations to receive a dollar-for-dollar reduction in their federal taxes in return for financing the rehabilitation or construction of low and very low-income rental units.) Targeted community projects are affordable housing projects that: are located in a rural area; reserve or prioritize a majority of units for seniors or provides a preference for veterans or first responders; are located near public transportation hubs; are rehabilitating or renovating existing housing (rather than new construction); or are owned by a public housing authority. (Thanks to GHF and Elizabeth Appley for help with this summary!)

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Finance Committee.

[HB 1203](#) (Kelley-16th) Entitles a landlord to use an off-duty sheriff, sheriff's deputy, marshal, or Peace Officer Standards & Training Council (POST) certified officer with jurisdiction to execute a writ of possession at the landlord's sole cost and expense when an on-duty official is unable to execute the writ within 14 days of the landlord's application or request for execution. The landlord will have access to a list of authorized off-duty personnel, and provide written notice to the sheriff, constable, or marshal of the time of execution of the writ at last five calendar days in advance of the execution.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[HB 1410](#) (Efration-104th) Updates provisions of the State Housing Trust Fund. Defines a "homeless person" in detail, including those living in public places not meant for long-term accommodation, residing in temporary shelters, or facing imminent housing loss due to eviction, lack of resources, or other circumstances; "qualified sponsor", and "stable housing accountability program". These programs, certified by the commission, are designed to provide homeless individuals with voluntary, immediate, and stable housing, while also outlining specific conditions for residency, ongoing assistance for securing permanent housing, and adherence to accountability measures such as sobriety, job training, and participation in counseling. The application process for these programs involves assessing various factors, including the projected number of homeless persons to be assisted, the sponsor's ability to leverage resources, the geographic distribution of existing programs, and the quality of assistance offered to residents. The bill underscores the importance of allocating funds exclusively for stable housing accountability programs and mandates a performance audit conducted by the state auditor. This audit aims to evaluate spending on homeless programs, scrutinize contract awards, assess program metrics, and ensure accountability and effectiveness in addressing homelessness. The audit findings are to be reported to key state officials by a specified deadline, facilitating transparency and accountability in homeless program expenditure and management.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

[SB 577](#) (Jackson-41st) Provides for landlords to remove personal property following execution of writs of possession within seven days of such execution; to authorize the marshal to remove such property after 14 days; to authorize the marshal to appoint ex-officio assistants to the marshal; to provide for the collection of costs associated with such removal.

STATUS: Senate State and Local Governmental Operations

[HR 1418](#) (Olaley-59th) Creates the House Study Committee on the Use of Local Fees to Support Affordable Housing.

STATUS: House Governmental Affairs Committee

[HR 1433](#) (Bell-75th) Creates the House Study Committee on the Eradication of Homelessness.

STATUS: House Governmental Affairs Committee

[SR 709](#) (James-35th) Creates the Senate Rental Housing Affordability Study Committee.

STATUS: Senate Urban Affairs Committee



Miscellaneous

HB 30 (Carson-46th) Provides a definition of antisemitism for purposes of state government, using the advisory definition of antisemitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) on May 26, 2016. IHRA defines antisemitism as a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews, and includes rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions, and religious facilities. An agency that enforces any criminal or noncriminal law or regulation that prohibits discrimination will consider the definition of antisemitism during that enforcement. Nothing in the bill will be construed to infringe upon First Amendment rights or an individual's right to engage in legally protected conduct or activity pertaining to U.S. foreign policy or international affairs.

STATUS: SIGNED INTO LAW 1/31/24

HB 237 (Hagan-156th) The original language which designated the Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby as the official soap box derby of the State of Georgia was completely removed from the bill and the bill was amended to include the sports betting Georgia Lottery Bill (which failed in the Senate earlier this session).

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee.

HB 301 (Ridley-22nd) The bill was originally about the amount of civil monetary penalty for violations of improperly passing a school bus and speeding in a school zone when captured by cameras, but was fully replaced with policy regarding penalties for local government entities that implement immigration sanctuary policies.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Public Safety Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 375 (Leverett-123rd) Relating to petition for appointment of a guardian, adds certain behavioral health providers (i.e., physician assistants, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists in psychiatric/mental health, marriage and family therapists or professional counselors) to the list of those who can sign an affidavit, and lays out such providers' roles in the context of guardianship/conservator situations. The bill also addresses provider compensation for certain services as pertains to these situations.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 880 (Ballard-147th) Brings Georgia into compliance with the federal 'Servicemembers Civil Relief Act' and allows the spouse of a servicemember to practice his or her occupation without a license so long as that spouse: 1) holds a current license to practice the occupation in another state; 2) is in good standing in the other state; 3) has filed an application for an expedited license by endorsement along with the military orders of the servicemember, which can both be filed prior to moving to Georgia; 4) is hired by an in-state employer that may lawfully hire the spouse to engage in the occupation; and 5) has his or her information verified by the in-state employer. If a spouse is not issued a license by endorsement within 30 days of filing the application, then he or she can continue to work for the in-state employer without being licensed. If the spouse is denied an expedited license by endorsement, then that spouse will no longer qualify to engage in the practice of the occupation. A professional licensing board is permitted to investigate any persons exempted under this bill and to revoke that person's exemption if the spouse violated any of the recognized standards of the occupation or knowingly made any misleading or deceptive representations in his or her application.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. PASSED SENATE. The bill awaits approval from the House to the Senate changes.

HB 1010 (Jones-47th) Increases the number of hours of annual paid parental leave for state employees from 120 to 240 hours. Paid parental leave can be used for the birth of a child or the foster and adoption placement of a child. The bill also requires the employing entity to provide notice of the benefits provided under this Code section to each eligible employee upon hiring and annually thereafter.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Children and Families Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.

HB 1021 (Daniel-117th) Increases the amount of the dependent exemption from \$3,000 per dependent to \$4,000 per dependent.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Finance Committee.

HB 1026 (Hagan-156th) Designates the Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby as the official soap box derby of the State of Georgia.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee

HB 1096 (Washburn-144th) Allows the Office of the Secretary of State to institute a unified system for tracking the continuing education credits completed by licensees of the various boards under the secretary of state's purview. Beginning on January 1, 2025, a professional licensing board shall not renew a license until the applicant has complied with all applicable continuing education requirements.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee.

HB 1127 (Pirkle-169th) Adds definitions in the 'Georgia Hemp Farming Act' for "consumable hemp product", "contaminants", and "full panel certificate of analysis". The bill outlaws the sale of consumable hemp products unless a processor or manufacturer has contracted a full panel certificate of analysis within the past 12 months. Random inspections of consumable hemp products may be conducted by the Department of Agriculture to ensure compliance with this Code section. HB 1127 outlaws the ability to sell hemp products directly, or indirectly through another person, to any individual under the age of 21. Proper identification must be presented to confirm that a purchaser is of required age.

STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee.

- HB 1165** (Mainor-56th) Replaces the chairperson of the Governor's Office of Children and Families with the commissioner of the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities on the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.
- STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.*
- HB 1190** (Collins-71st) Authorizes the division director within the office of the Secretary of State to issue licenses in instances when the requirements for licensure have been met and the professional licensing board fails to act within 60 days of the date of the receipt of an application and the information and documents required to be submitted with such application verifying that all requirements for the issuance of such license have been met.
- STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.*
- HR 1083** (Gambill-15th) Creates the House Study Committee on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Workforce for Georgia's Growing Economy.
- STATUS: House Health Committee. (As a House Study Committee, the bill does not need to cross for final passage)*
- HR 1169** (Hutchinson-106th) Creates the House Study Committee on the Economic Advantages of Marijuana Legalization.
- STATUS: House Health Committee. Passage TBD. (As a House Study Committee, the bill does not need to cross for final passage)*
- HR 1256** (Schofield-63rd) Creates the House Study Committee on the Establishment of a Baby Bonds Program.
- STATUS: House Health Committee. Passage TBD. (As a House Study Committee, the bill does not need to cross for final passage)*
- HR 1136** (Beverly-143rd) Amends the Constitution of the State of Georgia so as to authorize the Georgia General Assembly to provide by general law for sports betting, pari-mutuel betting, and casino gambling.
- STATUS: House Rules Committee.*
- SB 64** (Robertson-64th) Allows an adult who had been adopted to request and receive a copy of their original Georgia birth certificate following payment of a fee. The copy will indicate it is not a certified copy. A parent, sibling, or descendant of a deceased person may receive a copy of the decedent's birth certificate under the same procedure.
- STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Judiciary Committee. The bill was recommitted to committee and therefore did NOT PASS.*
- SB 180** (Setzler-37th) Provides for the preservation of religious freedom relating to state government.
- STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Judiciary Committee.*

SB 198 (Harrell-40th) Creates the Georgians with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Innovation Commission.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Public Health Committee.

SB 235 (Halpern-39th) Creates the HBCU Innovation and Economic Prosperity Planning Districts Commission.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Higher Education Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

SB 390 (Walker-20th) Prohibits the Board of Regents from using any public funds on any materials, services, or operations offered by the American Library Association or any of its affiliates. The bill also prohibits the Department of Administrative Services from accepting any bid or proposal made by the American Library Association or any of its affiliates for a state contract.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Higher Education Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

SB 414 (Kennedy-18th) Delineates the definitions and regulatory framework concerning the management of personal information by both public agencies and nonprofit organizations in detail. It provides comprehensive definitions for key terms such as "nonprofit organization," which encompasses various entities exempt from federal income tax, including charitable trusts, corporations, and religious organizations. Additionally, the term "person" is broadly defined to include individuals, corporations, partnerships, and other legal entities. "Personal information" is clearly defined as any data that directly or indirectly identifies individuals as supporters, donors, volunteers, or members of nonprofit organizations. The section explicitly prohibits public agencies from coercing individuals or nonprofits into providing personal information or publicly disclosing such data. Furthermore, it forbids public agencies from requesting lists of nonprofit supporters from their contractors or grantees. Exceptions to these restrictions are outlined, including instances where personal information disclosure is mandated by law, such as court-issued warrants or lawful requests during litigation. It also allows for personal information to be disclosed if voluntarily provided to the public by individuals or nonprofit organizations. The text addresses enforcement mechanisms by allowing individuals to pursue civil actions for damages against those who maliciously violate the provisions. It specifies potential treble damages and attorney's fees for willful violations, providing a strong deterrent against misconduct. Furthermore, the section criminalizes the knowing violation of these regulations by public agency employees, establishing misdemeanor penalties for such offenses.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Judiciary Committee.

SB 433 (Cowsert-46th) The 'Donor Intent Protection Act', requires a charitable organization or trust that accepts a contribution pursuant to an endowment agreement to not violate the terms of any donor-imposed restriction. If donor-imposed restriction is violated, the donor, the donor's direct descendants, or the donor's legal representative may bring a civil action within four years after discovering a breach of the endowment agreement. If a court finds a violation, the court is authorized to order a remedy consistent with the charitable purposes expressed in the endowment agreement. The court, however, will not be authorized to order the return of the contribution.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Judiciary Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

SB 437 (Robertson-29th) Authorize the Department of Agriculture to enforce certain criminal laws in OCGA Title 16 over which the agency would have jurisdiction. The bill also regulates consumable hemp products and prohibits the sale of consumable hemp products to individuals under the age of 21 years. It requires the posting of certain signs concerning the legal age to purchase consumable hemp products.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Recommended Do Pass by the House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.

SR 476 (Albers-56th) Creates the Senate Study Committee on Artificial Intelligence.

STATUS: Senate Science and Technology Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

SR 579 (Cowser-46th) Constitutional amendment authorizing the Georgia General Assembly to provide by general law for sports betting in this state; and for the regulation and allocation of revenues of such activities.

STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Higher Education Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (MONDAY).

SR 757 (Anderson-43rd) Creates the Senate Study Committee on the Establishment of a Baby Bonds Program.

STATUS: Senate Children and Families Committee



Advocacy Ask

End of Session Asks

We are down to the wire and need some streamlined advocacy to move some dollars and bills. That said, please pick one or two of the following that suits you and make the call to your state Senator or House member. Ask them to ensure that the following dollars are secured in the FY2025 budget. (There are too many emails for folks at this point in the session, so calling is best!

Don't know who your legislator is? [Click here to Find Your Legislator](#)

Need contact information for your legislator?

[Click here to Contact Your Senator](#)

[Click here to Contact Your House Member](#)

In the Georgia Department of Education:

Please appropriate funds (suggested \$20 million) for the afterschool/summer enrichment program, **BOOST 2.0 grant program** (BOOST = Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time) in the GaDOE. Last year, BOOST grantees operated **1000+** sites in **112** Georgia counties. **97** grantees served nearly **80,000 kids** in afterschool and **87,000 kids** in summer programs. The original program, BOOST, was funded by COVID recovery dollars at \$27M/year for the last three years and now those funds are expiring. We have clear evidence that the program was hugely successful in supporting our children, achieving: Improved school outcomes, enhanced well-being and connectedness, increased life and teamwork skills, and increased access to expanded supports and services.

In the Dept. of Human Services:

Please restore \$2.66 Million to the Georgia DHS Out-of-School Care Services Program (**line 2371**). These funds help provide afterschool and summer enrichment programming for children in and at risk of engaging with Georgia's foster care system. What's more, they draw down federal funds for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) to serve low-to-moderate income communities & children in the foster care system.

In the Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities:

Please increase or at least retain \$2 Million to expand the Georgia Apex Program (**line 805**), which provides school-based mental health in more than 730+ public schools across the state. These funds will allow DBHDD to better meet demand by using tele Behavioral health in places that lack providers and to support certain Community Service Board as they transition to CCBHCs (Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics).

In the Dept. of Public Health:

Please maintain funding to support and provide continuity for Georgia's families with infants via the Home Visiting program at \$1.75 Million (**line 3148**). Home Visiting programs have an amazing track record when it comes to reducing abuse and neglect, improving infant and maternal health (and reducing mortality), and helping families navigate various systems to obtain the best developmental outcomes for their children. These dollars will allow DPH to expand services to 13 additional counties (Coweta, Heard, Meriweather, Spalding, Troup, Upson, Baker, Colquitt, Dougherty, Grady, Mitchell, Thomas, Worth, Crisp, Dooley, Muscogee, Sumter, Talbot, Taylor, and Webster), which have a high incidence of preterm births and low birth weights.

In the Dept. of Community Health and the Dept. of Public Health:

Please maintain increased reimbursement rates for **speech-language pathology, audiology, physical therapy, and occupational therapy providers (lines 1109, 1135, 3150)**. Delivering appropriate compensation for such child-serving providers will help ensure that each child who needs services will get them and thus, vastly improve their ability to achieve their full potential.

In the Dept. of Juvenile Justice & Dept. of Human Services:

Please maintain **salary increases and enhancements** for employees in all sectors, but especially in **DJJ and child welfare sectors (lines 2717, 2739, 2760, 2778, 2317)** where high turnover endangers not only the children who come in contact with those agencies, but in many ways, the dedicated and mission-driven state employees who serve them.