

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

**February 19, 2024**

For many of us wandering the Halls of Government, this is the time of year where our days, parking sessions, and jokes all start to run together, like the colors of rainbow sherbet on a hot sidewalk. In January we start out bright-eyed and full of cheery optimism, but come Crossover Day (this year, fittingly on Leap Year!), the luster on our eyeballs has started to dull as well as our attitudes. Committee hearings turn long, the stairs to the fourth floor get steeper, and the six-hour-old-chicken-biscuit that you just found in the back of Room 606 in the CLOB is surprisingly appealing. Plus, this is Georgia, where the weather can go from arctic blast to tropical storm in the time it takes to sneeze. In fact, it is kind of like being [Alice in Wonderland](#). If you'll indulge the English Major in me...

### **Alice in Wonderland**

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank in the red chair, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, "and what is the use of a book," thought Alice "without pictures or conversations?"

### **Polly in Rotunda-land**

POLLY was beginning to get very tired of sitting by ROOM 341 IN A RED CHAIR, and of having TOO MUCH to do: once or twice she had peeped into the AMENDED BUDGET her COLLEAGUE was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, "and what is the use of a BILL," thought POLLY "without pictures or conversations?"

### **Alice in Wonderland**

...before her was another long passage, and the White Rabbit was still in sight, hurrying down it. There was not a moment to be lost: away went Alice like the wind, and was just in time to hear it say,

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as it turned a corner, "Oh my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!" She was close behind it when she turned the corner, but the Rabbit was no longer to be seen: she found herself in a long, low hall, which was lit up by a row of lamps hanging from the roof.

There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked; and when Alice had been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door, she walked sadly down the middle, wondering how she was ever to get out again.

### **Polly in Rotunda-land**

...before her was another long passage, and the CHAIRMAN was still in sight, hurrying down it. There was not a moment to be lost: away went POLLY like the wind, and was just in time to hear it say, as it turned a corner, "I'M ADDING TWELVE BILLS TO THE AGENDA. HOW LATE THE SESSION IS GETTING!" She was close behind it when she turned the corner, but the LAWMAKER was no longer to be seen: she found herself in a long, low hall, which was lit up by a row of lamps hanging from the roof.

There were doors all round the hall, but they were all THE WRONG MEETINGS; and when POLLY had been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door, she walked sadly down the middle, wondering how she was ever to TESTIFY.

### **Alice in Wonderland**

Soon her eye fell on a little glass box that was lying under the table: she opened it, and found in it a very small cake, on which the words "EAT ME" were beautifully marked in currants. "Well, I'll eat it," said Alice, "and if it makes me grow larger, I can reach the key; and if it makes me grow smaller, I can creep under the door; so either way I'll get into the garden, and I don't care which happens!"

She ate a little bit, and said anxiously to herself, "Which way? Which way?," holding her hand on the top of her head to feel which way it was growing, and she was quite surprised to find that she remained the same size: to be sure, this generally happens when one eats cake, but Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way things to happen, that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way.

So she set to work, and very soon finished off the cake.

### **Polly in Rotunda-land**

Soon her eye fell on a little CARDBOARD box that was lying under the table: she opened it, and found in it a very STALE CHICKEN BISCUIT, on which the words "GA POULTRY FEDERATION" were MYSTIFYINGLY SPELLED IN GREASE. "Well, I'll eat it," said POLLY, "and if it makes me grow larger, I can LET OUT MY SUIT; and if it makes me grow smaller, THAT MEANS I HAVE FOOD POISONING; so either way IT IS WHAT IT IS- I'm HUNGRY, and I don't care which happens!"

She ate a little bit, and said anxiously to herself, "Which way? Which way?," holding her hand on the top of her STOMACH to feel which way it was growing, and she was quite surprised to find that she remained the same size: to be sure, this generally happens when one eats AN OLD CHICKEN BISCUIT, RUNS FOUR FLIGHTS OF STAIRS EVERY 27 MINUTES AND HAS TO WALK 1.2 MILES TO THE PARKING DECK, but POLLY had got so much into the way of expecting

nothing but out-of-the-way (AND FAR AWAY) things to happen, that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way.

So she set to work, and very soon finished off the CHICKEN, THE TEPID SWEET TEA NEXT TO IT (WHICH HAD THE WORDS "DRINK ME" ON IT) AND THE LITTLE BAG OF PEANUTS SHE FOUND UNDER THE BENCH.

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Join us next week for Chapter VI: "A Caucus Race and A Long Amendment."

Oh- I've got to scoot! The March Hare is serving tea!

~Polly

("Come back!" the Caterpillar called after her. "I've something important to say!" POLLY REPLIED, "I'VE GOT TO READ THE BILLS AND DO THE ACTION ALERTS FIRST!")



## Justice, Public Safety, & School Discipline

**[HB 463](#)** (Ballinger-23rd) Revises the name of the Sexual Offender Registration Review Board to "Sexual Offender Risk Review Board." Among other provisions, the bill also provides for punishment for certain tiers of sexual offenses, including in certain circumstances, life imprisonment.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee.*

**[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 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 policies/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. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee.*

[HB 882](#) (Bruce-61st) Prohibits the release or posting of a booking photograph unless and until the individual depicted therein is convicted.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee. The bill will be heard in Subcommittee this TUESDAY.*

[HB 889](#) (Thomas-65th) States that in cases where the court has been unable to make contact on at least eight occasions within a 90-day period with such child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian, the court shall find that parental, guardian, or custodial consent has been waived and may order such child for rehabilitation, counseling, and in counsel and advice.

*STATUS: House Juvenile Justice Committee*

[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.*

[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.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee The bill will be heard in Subcommittee this WEDNESDAY.*

[HB 930](#) (Ridley-22nd) Prohibits the release or posting of a booking photograph unless and until the individual is convicted.

*STATUS: House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee*

[HB 932](#) (Mathis-149th) Provides that a person commits the offense of murder when, under certain circumstances, he or she causes the death of another human being irrespective of malice, by manufacturing or distributing the Schedule II controlled substance fentanyl or any controlled substance containing fentanyl or any derivative thereof.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee*

[HB 996](#) (Vance-133rd) Provide jailers who have been certified by the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council as having successfully completed the course of training required by Chapter 8 of Title 35, the 'Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Act,' with arrest powers.

*STATUS: House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee*

[HB 1056](#) (New-64th) Enhances penalties for certain persons who manufacture, deliver, distribute, dispense, administer, sell, or possess with the intent to distribute any controlled substance, counterfeit substance, or marijuana when such violation involves the manufacturing, delivering, distributing, dispensing, administering, selling, or possessing with intent to distribute to a person 14 years of age or younger.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee. The bill will be heard in Subcommittee this WEDNESDAY.*

[HB 1201](#) (Gaines-120th) Provides for the vacating of sentences of victims of trafficking sentenced under Article 3 of Chapter 8 of Title 42, relating to first offenders.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee*

[HB 1214](#) (Neal-79th) Allows the court to choose not to impose the death penalty or life without parole for a defendant who was less than 18 years of age at the time he or she committed a crime and provides for retroactive parole consideration of inmates serving prison sentences for a crime committed when they were less than 18 years of age.

*STATUS: House Juvenile Justice Committee*

[HB 1283](#) (Persinger-119th) Removes the exclusion of firearms from the description of Aggravated Assault.

*STATUS: House Juvenile Justice Committee*

[HB 1307](#) (Holly-116th) Provides for fair market wages for inmate labor and for tracking of inmate labor.

*STATUS: House Hopper*

[HR 1042](#) (Leverett-123rd) Creates the Joint Study Committee on Judicial System Compensation.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Committee*

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

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

[SB 63](#) (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 relived 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 110](#) (Walker-20th) "Back the Blue Act" establishes the Back the Blue Fund aimed at providing bonuses to deputy sheriffs and jailers in Georgia to support law enforcement efforts and enhance public safety. The legislation acknowledges the importance of hiring and retaining experienced law enforcement officers, citing benefits such as increased public safety and reduced expenses for agencies. It creates a mechanism for individuals to voluntarily contribute \$5.00 to the fund through their vehicle registration forms, administered by county tag agents. The state revenue commissioner oversees the fund and distributes the contributions annually to the Georgia Sheriffs' Association, which then allocates them equally to

each county sheriff. Administrative costs are capped at 5% of the fund. The act specifies that the fund is solely for bonuses and cannot be used to supplement salaries or replace existing funding for sheriff's office operations. Each sheriff has discretion in allocating the fund for bonuses. The legislation includes provisions for repealing the act by July 1, 2028, and authorizes the state revenue commissioner to establish procedures and regulations for its implementation.

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

[SB 232](#) (Kennedy-18th) Provides for probate court fees and to provide for funding of the State Children's Trust Fund, among other things.

*STATUS: Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill will be on the Senate Floor for a vote this TUESDAY.*

[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: Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.*

[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. Assigned to House Local Legislation Committee*

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

*STATUS: Senate Public Safety Committee*

[SB 513](#) (Still-48th) Relating to sexual offenses, so as to provide that the provisions of Code Section 16-6-16, relating to masturbation for hire, shall be applicable only to persons 17 years of age or older.

*STATUS: Senate Public Safety Committee*

[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: Senate Hopper*

[SR 570](#)

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

*STATUS: Senate Public Safety Committee*

## Child Welfare & Protection

[HB 218](#)

(Hilton-48th) Allows for the admission of an out-of-court statement, which is currently hearsay, as testimony in court when a disabled adult or a 17- year-old who is mentally or physically incapacitated describes any act of nonconsensual sexual contact or any act of physical abuse performed with or on the disabled adult or 17-year-old. The person to whom the information was told must be available to be cross examined. The disabled adult or 17-year-old who is mentally or physically incapacitated must testify about the alleged abuse.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee. The bill will be heard in Subcommittee this TUESDAY.*

[HB 656](#)

(Reeves-99th) Revises the offenses of cruelty to children in the second and third degrees and establish the offense of traveling to meet a minor for indecent purposes.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee*

[HB 875](#)

(Roberts-52nd) Prevents persons convicted of family violence offenses or subject to family violence temporary protective orders from receiving, possessing, transporting, purchasing, or transferring firearms.

*STATUS: House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee*

[HB 910](#)

(Jasperse-11th) Creates a civil remedy for damages against commercial entities that distribute material harmful to minors without performing age verification.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Committee. The bill will be heard in Committee this TUESDAY.*

[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: Recommended Do Pass by the House Juvenile Justice Committee. The bill rests in House Rules 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.*

**HB 1057** (Park-107th) Revises the tax credit for qualified caregiving expenses, allowing a family caregiver a tax credit against for qualified caregiving expenses in an amount not to exceed 10% of the total amount expended for qualified caregiving expenses, with an annual maximum of \$1000. Additionally, the bill adds individuals at least 18 years of age who requires assistance with one or more activities of daily living (as determined by a licensed physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner) and qualifies as a dependent of the family caregiver to the definition of "Qualifying family member."

*STATUS: House Ways and Means Committee*

**HB 1090** (Newton-127th) Expands the tax credit for contributions to foster child support organizations to allow such organizations to include as qualified expenditures wraparound and mentorship services for justice involved youth. The bill also expands the wraparound services that are qualified expenditures; allows for such tax credits to be used by certain insurance companies against certain tax liability; and removes the prohibition of allowing such a tax credit for qualified contributions that were utilized as a deduction or exemption from taxable income.

*STATUS: House Ways and Means Committee*

**HB 1110** (Crawford-84th) Provides for dating violence protective orders.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee*

**HB 1129** (Holcomb-81st) States that a victim of human trafficking is not criminally liable for any sexual crime (as defined in Code Section 16-3-6) or any other criminal act committed as a direct result of, or incident to, being a victim of human trafficking (under Code Section 16-5-46).

*STATUS: House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee*

**HB 1130** (Holcomb-81st) States that individuals who commit an offense as a direct result of being a victim of trafficking (under Code Section 16-5-46) are immune from criminal prosecution. The immunity motion may include documentation of the victim's status as a trafficking victim, creating a rebuttable presumption. Official documentation can include records from legal proceedings or affidavits from professionals. The

burden of proof in an immunity hearing lies with the defendant. The legislation clarifies that participating in an immunity hearing does not waive any defenses or objections at trial. Additionally, the bill specifies that certain factors, such as the failure to plead an affirmative defense or prevail at trial, are not relevant to proceedings related to trafficking victim defendants.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee*

**HB 1184** (Anulewicz-42nd) Adds communications made in the context of victim centered programs, including restorative justice practices, and sanctioned victim-offender dialogues in the list of conversations which are considered privileged.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Committee*

**HB 1209** (Clark-100th) "Ethan's Law" - Prohibits the court from mandating family reunification treatments, programs, or services that impose certain conditions on enrollment or participation. These conditions include violating court orders for no contact between a child and their parent or legal guardian, requiring overnight, out-of-state, or multiday stays, transferring physical or legal custody of the child, involving private youth transporters using force or threats, and employing coercion, verbal abuse, isolation, or other distressing circumstances. This ensures that family reunification efforts are conducted in a manner that prioritizes the well-being and safety of the child and avoids potentially harmful or coercive practices.

*STATUS: House Juvenile Justice Committee*

**SB 335** (Albers-56th) Includes "by virtue of adoption" in the definition of relationships in which the offense of incest is possible.

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

**SB 342** (Robertson-29th) Authorizes the disclosure or use of information from child abuse and neglect registries by the Department of Human Services to locate, recover, or provide services to a child determined to be missing or a victim of sexual exploitation. The bill also allows for access to records concerning reports of child abuse and missing or exploited children to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

*STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Juvenile Justice Committee.*

**SB 370** (Hodges-3rd) Requires massage therapists, body art studios and convenience stores to post human trafficking hotline information; and provides for human trafficking awareness training for board members. The bill provides for inspections of massage therapy practices; and requires licensees to display a photograph along with their massage therapy practice licenses.

*STATUS: Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee. The bill will be on the Senate Floor for a vote this TUESDAY.*

**SB 376** (Tillery-19th) Clarifies requirements of parents, DFCS, and court in order to improve timely permanent placement of a child removed from their home. The bill provides for a hearing to be held prior to a dependent child's fifteenth month in foster care to review a determination of the Division of Family and Children Services not to petition to terminate parental rights.

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

**SB 378** (Harbin-16th) Increases sentences for persons convicted of trafficking a minor or a developmentally disabled person for sexual servitude.

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

**SB 387** (Kirkpatrick-32nd) Provides that personal identification card applications of certain applicants who are either homeless or in the legal custody of the Division of Family and Children Services do not require signatures by the applicant's parent, guardian, or responsible adult; and authorizes the Department of Human Services to establish programs that will provide a child or youth entering foster care with a photograph.

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

**SB 401** (Kirkpatrick-32nd) Require juvenile courts to collect additional data relating to adherence to time frames for post-TPR reviews and report data on those time frames and on cases of dually adjudicated children to the Administrative Office of the Courts for further analysis and reporting to the legislature annually. The bill also eliminates service of process for parents under certain circumstances at the adjudication stage of a dependency case.

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

**SB 428** (Tillery-19th) States that in cases involving personal injury or death resulting from a foster child's use of a motor vehicle, the damages awarded against the foster parent, based solely on the family-purpose car doctrine or the negligent entrustment doctrine, cannot exceed the applicable policy limits of the foster parent's motor vehicle liability insurance coverage. This applies if the insurance coverage complies with the minimum requirements under Chapter 34 of Title 33, known as the 'Georgia Motor Vehicle Accident Reparations Act,' at the time of the incident leading to the legal action.

*STATUS: Senate Judiciary Committee*

**SB 454** (Strickland-17th) Provides for guidelines for child support award calculations.

*STATUS: Senate Judiciary Committee*

**SB 466** (Hatchett-50th) Provide for limitations of defense that a sexually exploitive visual medium is digitally altered for the offense of sexual exploitation of children.

*STATUS: Senate Judiciary Committee*

**SB 483** (Hatchett-50th) Enters Georgia into the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children, for the placement of dependent children in approved homes in other states.

*STATUS: Senate Children and Families Committee*

**SB 493** (Hatchett-50th) Provides for additional penalties for registered sexual offenders convicted of photographing a minor without the consent of the minor's parent or guardian. The bill also provides that such persons are prohibited from possessing, owning, or operating an unmanned aircraft system with the intent to photograph, observe, follow, or contact any person without his or her consent.

*STATUS: Senate Judiciary Committee*

**SB 498** (Jackson-41st) Creates the Georgia Interagency Council for the Homeless.

*STATUS: Senate Government Oversight Committee*

**SB 512** (Still-48th) This article is enacted under a constitutional provision authorizing additional penalty assessments for violations related to specific sexual crimes, with the proceeds earmarked for the care and rehabilitation of sexually exploited individuals in Georgia. It defines terms such as 'commission', 'fund', 'safe house', 'sexually explicit conduct', and 'sexually exploited victim'. The legislation 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. Members serve without compensation but receive allowances for attendance. 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.

*STATUS: Senate Public Safety Committee*

**SB 514** (Still-48th) Provides for a required human trafficking training program for hotels.

*STATUS: Senate Public Safety Committee*

**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: Senate Public Safety Committee*



## Health & Behavioral Health

**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 174** (Bentley-150th) Requires the Department of Education to provide information regarding recommended vaccination for meningococcal meningitis, human papillomavirus virus (HPV), and tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (TDAP) to parents and guardians of students entering the sixth grade.

*STATUS: Recommended Do Pass by the House Public Health Committee. The bill rests in House 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 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 363** (LaHood-175th) Increases the aggregate amount of rural hospital organization tax credits allowed from \$75 million to \$80 million. The limit for a member of a limited liability company, a shareholder of a Subchapter 'S' corporation, or a partner in a partnership is increased from \$10,000 to \$25,000. The sunset provision for the credit is changed to December 31, 2029. The bill also amends O.C.G.A. 31-8-9.1 to add "rural freestanding emergency department" to the definition of eligible "rural hospital organization".

*STATUS: Recommended Do Pass by the House Ways and Means Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.*

**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. Senate committee yet to be assigned.*

[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 579](#) (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 793](#) (Barton-5th) Authorizes applicants for a license in social work enrolled in a master's degree program to take the master's social work licensing examination in their final semester of the program.

*STATUS: Recommended Do Pass by the House Regulated Industries Committee. The bill will be on the House Floor for a vote this TUESDAY.*

[HB 856](#) (Au-50th) Establishes a program to provide urgent insulin assistance to eligible individuals, capping the copay at \$35 and outlines the roles of pharmacies and manufacturers.

*STATUS: House Public Health Committee*

[HB 857](#) (Au-50th) Makes insulin accessible to an eligible individual who needs an affordable supply of insulin for up to one year, with the option to renew annually. The bill also allows the pharmacy to collect a co-payment not to exceed \$75.00 for insulin dispensed through this program,

*STATUS: House Public Health Committee*

[HB 861](#) (Schofield-63rd) Requires ingredients to be listed on packages containing menstrual products.

*STATUS: House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs 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. Senate committee yet to be assigned.*

[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. Senate committee yet to be assigned.*

[HB 897](#) (Ridley-22nd) Repeals the authority of the Department of Public Health and all county boards of health to require persons to submit to vaccinations against or other measures to prevent contagious or infectious diseases.

*STATUS: House Public Health Committee*

[HB 913](#) (Barnes-86th) Establishes of a grant program for the purpose of creating emergency psychiatric assessment, treatment, and healing (EmPATH) units in hospitals.

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



[HB 963](#) (Scott-76th) Subject to appropriations, the State Board of Education shall establish and implement the K-5 Social and Emotional Health Pilot Program to determine the impact of dedicated school mental health professionals in kindergarten through fifth grade that have high-poverty, high-need students. The pilot program shall be implemented within pilot schools and administered by the department.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

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

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

[HB 1005](#) (Lim-98th) Requires that every health benefit policy shall provide coverage for rabies immune globulin and vaccinations administered after potential exposure to rabies.

*STATUS: House Insurance Committee*

[HB 1006](#) (Lim-98th) Requires local school systems or public schools issuing identification cards to include certain information regarding suicide prevention resources.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

[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: Recommended Do Pass by the House Public Health Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.*

[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 1050](#) (Mathiak-74th) Changes certain education requirements for licensure as a professional counselor or associate professional counselor, and states that only graduates from programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs can apply for licensure. It expands diagnostic scope of LPCs to include neuropsychological functioning or conditions and removes psychiatrists and psychologists from the definition of those who may be considered "supervisors" for the purposes of internships and licensure. The bill also states that

the confidential relations and communications between a client and a LPC, a licensed associate professional counselor, a master's social worker, a licensed clinical social worker, a licensed marriage and family therapist, or a licensed associate marriage and family therapist are placed upon the same basis as those provided by law between attorney and client.

*STATUS: House Regulated Industries Committee. The bill will be heard in Committee TODAY (Monday).*

**HB 1064** (Schofield-63rd) "Trauma Informed School Counselors Act" in Georgia amends the "Quality Basic Education Act" to ensure funding for school counselors. It establishes program weights to pay for at least one school counselor for every 450 students. Additionally, starting in Fiscal Year 2027, it introduces a new category of "trauma informed school counselors" with program weights to support their salaries for every 150 students. The Act mandates the creation of a trauma informed counseling endorsement by December 31, 2024, and outlines topics that must be covered in the associated training program. The Professional Standards Commission will assess the fidelity of training and implementation for those receiving the endorsement.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 1065** (Scott-76th) Establishes the "Temporary Youth Behavioral Health Services Program" within the Department of Public Health in Georgia. The program aims to enhance access to behavioral health care providers for individuals under the age of 18, including those up to 22 years old receiving special education services. Key provisions include defining terms such as "behavioral health care provider," "client," "portal," "telehealth," and "treatment." The department is tasked with developing the program's framework, including provider application processes, reimbursement rates, and a statewide public awareness campaign targeting organizations interacting with youth at the local level. The program is designed to offer behavioral health services through telehealth and in-person sessions.

*STATUS: House Public Health Committee*

**HB 1077** (Cooper-45th) Establishes 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: Recommended Do Pass by the House Public Health Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.*

[HB 1104](#) (Crawford-84th) Provides for mental health screenings in addition to physical examinations for student athletes.

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

[HB 1107](#) (Mainor-56th) Requires notice of admission and daily updates from a mental health facility to the parent or legal guardian of an involuntary minor patient under 12 years of age.

*STATUS: House Public Health 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.

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

[HB 1179](#) (Cooper-45th) Provides that step therapy protocols may not be required for medications prescribed for the treatment of serious mental illness under health benefit plans or Medicaid.

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

[HB 1252](#) (Scott-76th) Prohibits smoking and vaping inside any motor vehicle when a person who is under 18 years of age is present.

*STATUS: House Public Health 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: House Regulated Industries Committee. The bill will be heard in Subcommittee 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: Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.*
- SB 336** (Kirkpatrick-32nd) Allows the heads of the certain state agencies to be represented by a delegate or agent at any meeting of the Behavioral Health Coordinating Council or subcommittee meeting. Such representative will be counted toward a quorum, have all voting privileges as the member's delegate, and shall not be considered an absence of the member. Additionally, relating to licensing provisions relative to professional counselors, social workers, and marriage and family therapists, the bill authorizes the licensure board to waive all or a portion of the experience requirements for any applicant licensed under the laws of another jurisdiction who has maintained full licensure in good standing in such jurisdiction for a minimum of two years.
- STATUS: Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee*
- SB 350** (Kirkpatrick-32nd) Prohibits the sale of consumable hemp products to, and the purchase or possession of consumable hemp products by individuals under the age of 21 years.
- STATUS: Senate Judiciary 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 377** (Tillery-19th) Defines and clarifies qualified residential treatment programs as a type of licensed child-caring institution.

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

**SB 395**

(Dixon-45th) Authorizes schools to maintain a stock supply of opioid antagonists and trained school personnel to administer opioid antagonists and carry opioid antagonists on their person.

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

**SB 419**

(Walker-20th) Allows certified registered nurse anesthetist to administer anesthesia pursuant to an order by a duly licensed physician, dentist, or podiatrist.

*STATUS: Senate Health and Human Services Committee*

**SB 441**

(Merritt-9th) Requires prescribers to discuss with patients, their parent, or guardian the risks of addiction, dependence, and fatal overdose associated with opioid use and all available alternative treatments; and to document the notification in the patient's file. The bill also requires prescribers to provide information regarding the safe disposal, if available, to patients, their parent, or guardian; and excludes prescribers providing prescription for a patient who is currently in active treatment for cancer, receiving hospice care from a licensed hospice or palliative care facility, or is a resident of a long-term care facility, or to any medications that are being prescribed for use in the treatment of substance abuse or opioid dependence.

*STATUS: Senate Health and Human Services Committee*

**SB 445**

(Sims-12th) Requires the Department of Education to provide to parents and guardians of students entering the sixth grade information regarding recommended adolescent vaccinations in print and electronic form. Vaccines include meningococcal meningitis disease, human papillomavirus (HPV), and tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (TDAP).

*STATUS: Senate Education and Youth Committee*

**SB 455**

(Strickland-17th) Relating to recovery of medical assistance from third party liable for sickness, injury, disease, or disability, so as to revise certain provisions to comply with federal law and to bar liable third-party payers from refusing payment solely because a health care item or service did not receive prior authorization. The bill also requires a third-party payer to respond to a state inquiry regarding a health care claim within 90 days.

*STATUS: Senate Health and Human Services Committee*

[SB 460](#) (Dixon-45th) Relating to physicians, acupuncture, physician assistants, cancer and glaucoma treatment, respiratory care, clinical perfusionists, and orthotics and prosthetics practice, so as to revise 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: Senate Health and Human Services Committee*

[SB 480](#) (Hodges-3rd) Provides for student loan repayment for mental health and substance use professionals serving in certain capacities; and authorizes the board to approve applications; to provide for eligibility requirements.

*STATUS: Senate Health and Human Services Committee*

[SB 481](#) (Hodges-3rd) 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: Senate Health and Human Services Committee*

[SB 487](#) (Lucas-26th) Provides for a Medicaid waiver expansion to cover eligible adults below 95 percent of the federal poverty level, integrate behavioral health and housing services with Medicaid accountable care organizations, and establish reporting requirements to the General Assembly.

*STATUS: Senate Health and Human Services Committee*

[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: Senate Health and Human Services Committee*

[SB 519](#) (Watson-1st) Prohibits prescribing or administering certain hormone replacement therapies and puberty blocking medications for certain purposes to minors; and prohibits prescribing or administering certain hormone replacement therapies and puberty blocking medications for the treatment of gender dysphoria for certain purposes.

*STATUS: Senate Hopper*

[SB 524](#) (Anavitarte-31st) Provides for the certification of community health workers; and for the establishment of the Georgia Community Health Worker Certification Committee. The bill also provides for Medicaid reimbursement and insurance coverage.

*STATUS: Senate Hopper*



## Maternal & Infant Care

**HB 1029** (Mathiak-74th) Requires the newborn screening system to include Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

*STATUS: House Public Health Committee*

**HB 1030** (Crowe-118th) Authorizes ambulance services to accept physical custody of a newborn and authorizes the placement of newborn safety devices in a medical facility, fire station, police station, or ambulance service if the device is located in an area that is conspicuous and visible to employees, agents, or staff members of such facility or station and such facility or station is staffed by an emergency medical services provider on a 24 hour, seven days per week basis.

*STATUS: House Public Health Committee*

**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 1038** (Daniel-117th) Creates the offense of "reproductive battery, stating that a "physician commits the offense of reproductive battery if he or she intentionally transfers or implants into the body of a recipient human reproductive material from a donor knowing the recipient has not consented to the use of the human reproductive material from such donor." The bill also provides that consent to an anonymous donor is not a defense, sets out a statute of limitations and defines penalties, including the revocation of a physician's license.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee. The bill will be heard in Subcommittee this TUESDAY.*

**HB 1081** (Taylor-173rd) "Georgia Preeclampsia Biomarker Testing Act of 2024" Requires private insurers and Georgia Medicaid to provide coverage for testing that allows pregnant women to be screened for preeclampsia through biomarker testing.

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

**HB 1154** (Cannon-172nd) Mandates Medicaid coverage when pediatricians offer and perform maternal screening for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.

*STATUS: House Public Health Committee*

**HB 1155** (Cannon-172nd) "Newborn Baby and Mother Protection Act" - Requires minimum health policy coverage, prohibited actions by insurance providers, and required notice to mother, so as to mandate coverage when pediatricians offer and provide mothers with screening for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.

*STATUS: House Public Health Committee*

**HB 1176** (Kelley-16th) Provide for coverage by private insurance, the State Health Benefits Plan, and the state Medicaid program of infant formula when a woman is medically unable to breastfeed.

*STATUS: House Public Health Committee*

**HB 1215** (Cannon-172nd) "Georgia Dignity in Pregnancy and Childbirth Act" - Requires perinatal facilities in this state to implement evidence-based implicit bias programs for its healthcare professionals, and for the compilation and tracking of data on severe maternal morbidity and pregnancy related deaths.

*STATUS: House Public Health Committee*

**HB 1216** (Cannon-172nd) Provides for a pilot program to provide coverage under the Medicaid program for doula care for pregnant Medicaid recipients.

*STATUS: House Public Health Committee*

**HB 1301** (Mathiak-74th) Requires the newborn screening system to include Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

*STATUS: House Hopper*

**HB 1302** (Bennett-94th) Provides for mandatory maternal mental health screening for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders for Medicaid recipients at specific points during and after pregnancy, and for additional screening as deemed necessary by healthcare providers. The bill also requires mandatory education regarding postpartum depression to women after childbirth; and authorizes the department to submit necessary amendment or waiver requests to implement such screening as part of the state Medicaid program.



*STATUS: House Hopper*

**[SB 283](#)** (Strickland-17th) Provides for reasonable accommodations to job applicants and employees for circumstances related to pregnancy, childbirth, and related conditions.

*STATUS: Senate Judiciary Committee*

**[SB 372](#)** (Islam-Parkes-7th) Exempts tax on the sale or use of equipment, furniture, clothing, vitamins, toys, bedding, and other goods designed and customarily used for child-rearing from prenatal through age three.

*STATUS: Senate Finance Committee*



## Early Childhood Education & Out-of-School Time

**[HB 941](#)** (Erwin-32nd) Allows capital outlay funds to be used for educational facilities for Georgia's Pre-K Program provided by the school system. The bill also allows that student projection counts may include pre-kindergarten.

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

**[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: Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Education and Youth Committee. The bill will be on the Senate Floor for a vote this TUESDAY.*

**[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: Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Children and Families Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.*

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

STATUS: SENATE ADOPTED.

## K-12 Education

[HB 127](#) (Mainor-56th) Requires the State Board of Education to establish rules and regulations for local school system outreach efforts regarding the English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programs, and to engage in such community outreach efforts. The bill also provides for standards for foreign language interpreters providing services to students in educational settings and requires local school systems to provide certain notices concerning interpretation services in annual notices for IEPs and students with disabilities. Interpretation services could be provided in an accessible way through a language line, family member, friend, or student.

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

[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.

[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 579** (Barrett-24th) Mandates that Special Needs Scholarship estimates must be provided to parents by July 1st. Additionally, the bill enables the Georgia Department of Education to offer electronic payments to private schools, simplifying the payment process. It also outlines details about the parental scholarship amount appeal process. Furthermore, the bill requires schools to display student data in a clear and disaggregated manner, as well as list the accommodations each participating private school can provide. Disaggregated data collected will include information about students eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

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

**HB 585** (Jones-25th) Allows local boards of education of high-growth school systems to impose, levy, and collect educational development impact fees. The bill has an effective date of January 1, 2025, which is dependent on passage of a constitutional amendment to authorize educational development impact fees.

*STATUS: House Governmental Affairs Committee*

**HB 822** (Carpenter-4th) Provides that the prescribed course of study in sex education and HIV prevention instruction is age appropriate and medically accurate; to include the subject of consent in such course of study.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 891** (Thomas-65th) Creates a tax credit of up to \$2,000 per year per student for certain social extracurricular expenses for home school students. Such expenses shall be limited to tuition or fees for participation or attendance in this state at any in-person children's sports league; children's group instructional class for ballet, dance, or martial arts; or instructional camp for groups of children.

*STATUS: House Ways and Means Committee*

**HB 899** (Davis-87th) Provides for QBE funding assistance to eligible public schools to reduce school violence and improve school safety and security.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 900** (Davis-87th) Establishes the Refugee and International Students Equalization (RISE) program to provide for funding and wraparound services for eligible students; defines "international student"; and establishes a program weight and teacher-student ratio for the RISE program in the QBE funding formula.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 914** (Barnes-86th) Authorizes local boards of education and other public school governing bodies to offer driver education as an elective course; to provide for funding from local funds, student fees subject to waiver, and state funding subject to appropriations.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 936** (Bonner-73rd) Requires multiple occupancy restrooms and changing areas in public schools to be designated for exclusive use by males or females. The bill also states that a public school or local school system that sponsors or supervises an overnight trip involving public school students shall ensure that a public school student attending the overnight trip either shares sleeping quarters with a member or, if necessary, multiple members, of the same sex; or is provided single-occupancy sleeping quarters. A public school student attending an overnight trip may share sleeping quarters with a member of the opposite sex if the member of the opposite sex is a member of such student's immediate family.

*STATUS: House Education 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. Assigned to Senate Higher Education 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: Recommended Do Pass by the House Education Committee. The bill will be on the House Floor for a vote this TUESDAY.*

**HB 995** (Bonner-73rd) Mandates local school systems to offer an optional nationally recognized multiple-aptitude battery assessment for students in grades 11 and 12, aimed at predicting future academic and occupational success in the military. Under this requirement, the assessment must be provided to students during school hours at least once per school year, providing them with an opportunity to engage with the assessment and potentially glean insights into their future career paths and educational pursuits.

*STATUS: Recommended Do Pass by the House Education Committee. The bill will be on the House Floor for a vote this TUESDAY.*

**HB 1027** (Ballard-147th) Provides that beginning in the 2026-2027 school year at least a half-credit computer science course shall be a high school graduation requirement; and that such course shall not include virtual or remote instruction, unless the only feasible opportunity for such student to complete such graduation requirement is through virtual or remote instruction.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 1036** (Daniel-117th) Requires a course of instruction in pregnancy, health, and human development for students in grades nine through 12 and that such course of instruction be included in the course of instruction regarding health and physical education. The bill also requires the State Board of Education to consult with the Department of Public Health to develop the course.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 1045** (Clark-100th) Requires each school in this state that receives state funding for education to give notice and receive written consent prior to providing students in kindergarten through grade 12 with sexual orientation or gender identity instruction, and prohibits school nurses, counselors, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel from knowingly encouraging or coercing a student under the age of 18 years to withhold from his or her parent or legal guardian that his or her perception of his or her gender is inconsistent with his or her sex or from knowingly withholding from the parent or legal guardian of a student under the age of 18 years information related to his or her perception that his or her gender is inconsistent with his or her sex.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 1082** (Mainor-56th) States that no local board of education, public school administrator, or other school personnel, acting in an official capacity, can prohibit public school students from voluntarily praying or engaging in privately initiated religious speech and activities as long as it doesn't disrupt classwork or infringe on the rights of others. However, reasonable rules of order can be imposed to maintain order. The provision also prohibits promoting or favoring any religion or compelling students to participate in or refrain from religious activities. Public school personnel, while on duty, are allowed to engage in privately initiated religious speech and activities on

the same terms as other private conversations, but they must not compel or persuade students to join in such activities.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 1122** (Hilton-48th) Provides for one superintendent for each state charter school; and for funding for local and state charter school principals. The bill increases opportunities for students to attend and be enrolled in the public schools where their parents or guardians are employed, including charter schools, regardless of school attendance zone or school system residency, and limits the application of certain state charter school conflict of interest provisions to executive-level employees, rather than all employees, of local boards of education or local school systems.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 1131** (Townsend-179th) Provides for evidence-based suicide awareness and training programs, youth violence prevention training programs, and student violence prevention clubs in elementary and secondary education. The bill also requires local policies for anonymous reporting of a dangerous, violent, threatening, harmful, or potentially harmful activity which occurs or is threatened to occur on school property, or which relates to students or school personnel.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 1133** (Mainor-56th) Requires training programs for local boards of education to include certain provisions, and for annual completion of such training programs.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 1167** (Townsend-179th) Removes a provision prioritizing low-performing schools applicable to the award of grants to public schools by a nonprofit corporation incorporated by the Georgia Foundation for Public Education for such purpose.

*STATUS: House Ways and Means Committee*

**HB 1186** (Hilton-48th) Clarifies that ratings are a single numerical score based on indicators of quality of learning for each public school as relates to indicators of quality of learning in individual schools and school systems, comparison to state standards, rating schools and school systems. The bill also provides uniform definitions of "dropout" and "below grade level".

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 1194** (Dubnik-29th) Requires the State Board of Education to provide for procedures for student transfers between local school systems; and that only the receiving local school system shall have the authority to grant or refuse permission for such transfers.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 1198** (Bazemore-69th) Establishes a three-year pilot immersive writing program for eligible public elementary schools and provides for grant funds for eligible public schools to develop and implement immersive writing programs for students in grades two through four.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 1221** (Smith-18th) Requires the State Board of Education to provide for procedures for student transfers between local school systems; and states that only the receiving local school system shall have the authority to grant or refuse permission for such transfers. The bill also provides for caps on tuition that can be charged to a student by an enrolling local unit of administration.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 1226** (Hilton-48th) Provides for public school students to be permitted to attend courses in religious moral instruction provided by a person or organization independently of a public school, subject to certain conditions. The bill also provides for students to receive academic credit for such courses, requires local education agencies to adopt certain policies, and prohibits students who participate in such courses from being counted as absent from school.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 1262** (Mainor-56th) Provides for a cause of action by aggrieved students against local education agencies for breach of the duty to provide for an adequate public education.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Committee*

**HB 1276** (Cox-28th) Provides for high school student athletes and prospective student athletes to receive name, image, or likeness compensation.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

**HB 1290** (Bazemore-69th) Requires that any course of study in sex education and HIV/AIDS prevention instruction is age appropriate and provides instruction on consent and intimate partner violence and abuse; establishes new requirements on the prescribed course for human trafficking awareness; and requires the course on awareness and prevention of sex abuse and assault be taught through the twelfth grade.

*STATUS: House Public Health Committee*

**HR 1114** (Mainor-56th) Amends the Constitution so as to provide that sales tax for educational purposes may be used and expended for the benefit of public charter schools located within local school systems.

**SB 88** *STATUS: House Education Committee*  
(Summers-13th) Requires that parents at private schools opt-in before students attend classes “addressing issues of gender identity, queer theory, gender ideology, or gender transition.” The bill also requires local boards to set policies providing guidelines for staff and students.

*STATUS: Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Education & Youth Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.*

**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. The bill also caps tuition that can be charged to a student by an enrolling local unit of administration that exclusively provides virtual instruction to such student.

*STATUS: Recommitted to Senate Education & Youth 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: Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Education & Youth Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.*

**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: Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Education & Youth Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.*



**SB 233** (Dolezal-27th) 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, and purchase of curriculum, professional services, transportation, and other expenses authorized by the State Board of Education. 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 annually. The bill stipulates reporting requirements participating schools must provide annually to the Georgia Student Finance Commission and the Department of Education. The commission must annually report to the General Assembly on the previous fiscal year's promise scholarship recipients and their respective schools.

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

**SB 365** (Dolezal-27th) Provide for notification to parents and legal guardians of public school students of the right to receive email notification each time their child obtains school library materials. The bill also expands the definition of "public record" relating to inspection of students' records by parents.

*STATUS: Senate Education and Youth Committee*

**SB 379** (Harbin-16th) Authorizes local school systems and public schools to employ or accept as a volunteer school chaplain, and provides that school chaplains shall provide support, services, and programs for students as assigned.

*STATUS: Senate Education and Youth Committee*

**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.*

**SB 423** (Halpern-39th) Mandates that, by July 1, 2025, each public high school in Georgia with interscholastic athletics must have at least one automated external defibrillator (AED) on-site, following a cardiac emergency response plan. It also requires public school safety plans to include a cardiac emergency response plan (CERP) for responding to incidents of sudden cardiac arrest, with specified guidelines and annual reviews. Schools can request state funding for safety improvements.

*STATUS: Senate Education and Youth Committee*

**SB 432** (Harrell-40th) Starting from the 2024-2025 school year, elementary schools are required to schedule an average of 30 minutes per school day for recess for students in kindergarten through grade five. Schools with grades six through eight must schedule an average of 20 minutes per school day for recess. Recess cannot be withheld for disciplinary or academic reasons for students in kindergarten through grade eight. By August 1, 2024, each local board of education must establish a written policy ensuring recess and addressing personnel authorization, safety measures, and support for academic learning during recess. By September 1, 2024, each local board of education must provide the State Board of Education with a copy of the recess policy. This Code section prioritizes the physical health and safety of students and is not subject to waivers for strategic waivers school systems or local flexibility options.

*STATUS: Senate Education and Youth Committee*

**SB 438** (Summers-13th) Defines "gender" as a person's biological sex determined by reproductive biology and genetics at birth, as stated on the official birth certificate. "Gender identity" is defined as a person's self-perceived or claimed gender. The legislation prohibits schools from allowing a person whose gender is male but identifies as female to participate in female-designated interscholastic athletics. It also restricts the use of multiple occupancy restrooms or changing areas designated for the opposite gender in the context of interscholastic athletics. Students or parents aggrieved by violations have the right to file grievances, appeal decisions to the local board of education, and seek private legal action for injunctive or declaratory relief. The provision explicitly notes that it does not override requirements or protections under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. The bill also repeals a grant of discretionary authority to athletic association executive oversight committees by deleting "prohibit students whose gender is male from participating in athletic events that are designated for students whose gender is female, then the athletic association may adopt a policy to that effect; provided, however, that such policy shall be applied to all of the athletic association's participating public high schools;" from current law.

*STATUS: Senate Education and Youth Committee*

**SB 440** (Brass-28th) "Accelerated Career Diploma Program" - Creates a 3-year pilot program with grants from the Georgia Student Finance Commission. Included in the variety of requirements for participation is a half-credit course in financial literacy.

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

**SB 459** (Dixon-45th) Requires the State Board of Education to develop a comprehensive civics education program for students in kindergarten through grade 12, and requires the Department of Education, in consultation with the Georgia Commission on Civics Education, to curate oral history resources to be known as "Portraits in

Patriotism" as part of such civics education program and develop civics education program workshops for public school personnel.

*STATUS: Senate Education and Youth Committee*

**SB 464** (Dixon-45th) Establishes the School Supplies for Teachers Program, subject to appropriation by the General Assembly and the availability of other funds for such purpose.

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

**SB 501** (Harbin-16th) Authorizes public elementary and secondary schools to display the Ten Commandments and provides for the display of the Ten Commandments in each public elementary and secondary school classroom in this state, subject to appropriation by the General Assembly or other available funding. The bill also authorizes the expenditure of public funds for the purchase of such displays.

*STATUS: Senate Education and Youth Committee*

**SB 527** (Islam-Parkes-7th) Exempts sales of clothing and school related supplies for limited periods of time.

*STATUS: Senate Hopper*

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

**SR 575** (Hickman-4th) Constitutional Amendment providing that sales tax for educational purposes may be used and shall be expended for the procurement of materials, supplies, and instructional supports to be used for educational purposes in the classroom; and that such purchases shall comprise not more than 15% of the local school system's total expenditure of proceeds of the tax.

*STATUS: Senate Finance Committee*



## 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 148** (Hugley-141st) Establishes grant funds to be paid by public schools to student teachers who successfully complete their student teaching requirements and requires the State Board of Education to establish rules and regulations to implement the program.

*STATUS: House Higher Education Committee*

**HB 853** (Bell-75th) Repeals the "Drug-free Postsecondary Education Act of 1990," thereby removing provisions that make students convicted of certain drug offenses ineligible for loans, scholarships, and grants. Notably, the bill provides that students shall not be deemed ineligible for HOPE scholarships or grants based solely on certain convictions.

*STATUS: House Higher Education Committee*

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

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

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

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

[HB 1158](#) (Jackson-68th) Regarding alimony and child support, so as to authorize post-majority child support when such child is enrolled in and attending an institution of postsecondary education.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Committee*

[HB 1195](#) (Kendrick-95th) Provides for a tax credit for workforce-ready graduates employed in high-tech full-time jobs in rural counties in this state.

*STATUS: House Ways and Means Committee*

[HB 1224](#) (Fleming-114th) Revises the definition of "approved school"; to provide increased grant amounts for eligible students enrolled in certain programs that are directly related to high-demand jobs or career fields, as designated by the Georgia Student Finance Authority

*STATUS: House Higher Education Committee*

[HB 1231](#) (Holcomb-81st) Allows academically successful students who are concurrently seeking a baccalaureate degree and a first professional degree to use the full number of hours of HOPE scholarship eligibility; and allows academically successful students who commence a graduate program at an eligible postsecondary institution within 18 months of earning a baccalaureate degree to use the full number of hours of HOPE scholarship eligibility.

*STATUS: House Higher Education Committee*

[SB 385](#) (Williams-25th) Revises legislative intent language regarding postsecondary study beyond the second-year level at the Georgia Military College.

*STATUS: Recommended DO Pass by the Senate Veterans, Military and Homeland Security Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.*

[SB 399](#) (Echols-49th) Encourages and state expectations for the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia and local boards of education to enter into and amend existing agreements with the State Board of the Technical College System of Georgia for awarding postsecondary course credits that are transferrable between the university system and the technical college system.

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

[SB 469](#) (Esteves-6th) Relating to the Georgia Higher Education Savings Plan, so as to increase the maximum amount of contributions allowed per beneficiary of savings trust accounts for higher education expenses from \$235,000 to \$450,000.

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

[SB 476](#) (Esteves-6th) Provides for in-state tuition for certain noncitizen students.

*STATUS: Senate Higher Education Committee*

[SB 497](#) (Hickman-4th) Redesignates the High-demand Career Initiatives Program as the High Demand Apprenticeship Program. The bill also has provisions relating to accessing HOPE scholarship funds for dual enrolled students and termination, so as to make a conforming change.

*STATUS: Senate Higher Education Committee*

[SB 509](#) (Dixon-45th) Prohibits public postsecondary institutions from inquiring about an applicant's criminal history, with exceptions for specified felony offenses. However, once admitted, institutions are permitted to request and utilize criminal history record information for counseling, decision-making regarding campus life participation, and financial aid purposes, considering factors like the nature of the offense, time passed since, the student's age at the time, and evidence of rehabilitation. Violations of these regulations may result in the withholding of state funding. Additionally, the legislation outlines circumstances under which criminal history record information is inadmissible in civil proceedings involving the institution, its employees, or agents, emphasizing relevance to the case, restrictions or sealing of records, or lack of conviction.

*STATUS: Senate Higher Education Committee*

[SB 511](#) (Harbin-16th) Relating to the university system, so as to require quarterly reports regarding certain funding received from individuals or entities related to China.

*STATUS: Senate Higher Education Committee*

**SB 526** (Hickman-4th) Establishes the Georgia Good Faith Grant Program, which aims to provide needs-based grants to eligible students pursuing postsecondary education in Georgia. Key terms and definitions are provided, including those for the commission overseeing the program, the cost of attendance, eligible institutions, grant students, matching grants, program grants, student aid index, and Title IV regulations. Eligibility criteria for students seeking program grants are detailed, including completion of accredited secondary education, GPA requirements, enrollment status, completion of financial aid applications, demonstrated financial need, and residency classification. The text also specifies the renewal conditions for grants and the calculation of demonstrated financial need. Additionally, it outlines the disbursement process and the requirement for private colleges or universities to provide matching grants to eligible students. The commission is tasked with developing rules and regulations to ensure that grants are awarded to students demonstrating the most need.

*STATUS: Senate Hopper*

**SR 602** (Beach-21st) Amends the Constitution of the State of Georgia so as to authorize the General Assembly to by general law restrict, regulate, or prohibit the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia from approving any increase in tuition or student fees of more than 3 percent greater than the amount of such tuition or student fee for the preceding academic year.

*STATUS: Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee*



## Environmental Safety

**HB 971** (Newton-127th) Provides for a tax credit (\$300 tax credit per lifetime maximum) for certain eligible expenses incurred for firearm safe handling instructional courses and firearm secure storage devices; to provide for an aggregate annual cap of \$5 Million.

*STATUS: Recommended Do Pass by the House Ways and Means Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.*

**HB 1097** (Vance-133rd) Removes the availability of online courses without an instructor for purposes of driver education training.

*STATUS: House Motor Vehicles Committee*

**HB 1111** (Crawford-84th) Provides for the storage of a firearm within a motor vehicle or vessel and for exceptions to the standards for the carrying of weapons within school safety zones, at school functions, or on a bus or other transportation furnished by a school.

*STATUS: House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee*

**HB 1126** (Pirkle-169th) Repeals all law relative to enforcement of speeding in school zones through the use of automated traffic enforcement safety devices, and prohibits a local governing body or law enforcement agency from entering into or renewing a contract that provides for enforcement of laws relative to speeding in school zones through the use of automated traffic enforcement safety devices.

*STATUS: House Motor Vehicles Committee. The bill will be heard in Committee this TUESDAY.*

**HB 1284** (Daniel-117th) Provides suggested standards for the establishment of school bus routes; enhances the penalties for meeting or overtaking a school bus; and provides for notification to insurance carriers upon issuance of a second or subsequent civil monetary penalty for such violations.

*STATUS: House Motor Vehicles Committee. The bill will be heard in Committee this TUESDAY.*

**HB 1295** (Pirkle-169th) Provides for the failure to wear a safety belt or safety restraints for children as admissible evidence in civil actions; to prohibit the failure to wear a safety belt or safety restraints for children as a basis for cancellation of insurance coverage.

*STATUS: House Hopper*

**HB 1296** (Hilton-48th) Provides for social media age verification, for parental permission and supervision, and for restrictions on minor's social media account activity. The bill also provides for the Consumer Protection Division of the Department of Law to investigate complaints; and for civil remedies.

*STATUS: House Hopper*

**HB 1310** (Moore-91st) Requires persons doing business in this state shall not expose individuals to chemicals known to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning nor discharge such chemicals into drinking water; and that the Governor shall publish lists of such chemicals. The bill also authorizes the Attorney General and, under specified conditions, district attorneys and other persons to seek injunctions and civil penalties. The bill establishes the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Fund.

*STATUS: House Hopper*

**HB 1163** (Moore-91st) Amends the Constitution of the State of Georgia so as to provide that revenue derived from the regulation of safe drinking water and toxic enforcement may be dedicated for certain purposes and not deposited into the general fund; and authorizes the General Assembly to create the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Fund.



*STATUS: Senate Hopper*

**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** (Anavitarte-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 medial platforms to provide certain information to parents upon request; and gives enforcement authority to the Attorney General.

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

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

**SB 408** (Brass-28th) Removes the Board of Natural Resources' authority to require the regulation of fluoridation of potable public water supplies in incorporated communities.

*STATUS: Senate Natural Resources and the Environment Committee*

**SB 492** (Williams-25th) States that when establishing routes for school buses, a public school system shall ensure that any stop at which a student is required to enter or exit the school bus is located upon the same side of the roadway as the door to the bus.

*STATUS: Senate Education and Youth Committee*

**SB 510** (Harbin-16th) Provides that all occupants of a passenger vehicle, whether in a front seat or back seat, shall be restrained by a seat safety belt; and provides for an exception for children under eight who are properly restrained.

*STATUS: Senate Public Safety Committee*

## 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 965** (Scott-76th) Provides for 60 days' notice of rental increase by landlord to tenant.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Committee*

**HB 1017** (Seabaugh-34th) Includes when a person enters a land or premises for purposes of residing on such land or premises in the definition of criminal trespass.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Committee*

**HB 1034** (Franklin-160th) Designates the fourth Friday in November of each year as "National Sugarcane Syrup Day", because, frankly, why not?

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

**HB 1048** (Carpenter-4th) Designates cornbread as the official state bread.

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

[HB 1055](#) (Neal-79th) "Georgia Eviction Records Restriction Act" - Provides that certain records of dispossession actions during the COVID-19 public health emergency may be sealed from the public if the dispossession action was a result of any of the following: extraordinary financial and economic hardships beyond such person's control; COVID-19 related illness; loss of employment; or inability to obtain certain public benefits that were allocated for renters (If public benefits were obtained, such person shall demonstrate that such public benefits were used for their intended purpose).

*STATUS: House Judiciary Committee*

[HB 1059](#) (Scott-76th) "Georgia Tenant Protection and Mediation Act." Focuses on landlord and tenant relations. The key points include procedures for landlords to demand possession of rented or leased properties, with provisions for cases involving disabled adults and low-income individuals. The act introduces a residential eviction diversion program, allowing mediation between landlords and tenants to resolve lease violations. Landlords are required to participate in mediation, and failure to comply may be used as a defense by tenants.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Committee*

[HB 1073](#) (Washburn-144th) Repeals additional hearing and notice provisions regarding halfway houses, drug rehabilitation centers, or other facilities for treatment of drug dependency.

*STATUS: Recommended Do Pass by the House Governmental Affairs Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.*

[HB 1139](#) (Gilliard-162nd) Provides for free meals to public school students enrolled in after-school education programs or summer school education programs.

*STATUS: House Education Committee*

[HB 1156](#) (Jackson-68th) Repeals Code Section 44-7-19, relating to restrictions on rent regulation by local governments.

*STATUS: House Governmental Affairs Committee*

[HB 1157](#) (Jackson-68th) "Fair Business Practices Act of 1975," so as provide that a violation of the statute limiting certain rent increases is an unlawful business practice; provides for rent increase limits; and for exceptions; as well as for defense in eviction actions.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Committee*

[HB 1203](#) (Kelley-16th) Entitles a landlord to use an off-duty sheriff, sheriff's deputy, marshal, or POST (Peace Officer Standards & Training Council) 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: Recommended Do Pass by the House Judiciary Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.*

[HB 1210](#) (Lim-98th) Outlines the definition of "multifamily residential housing" or "multifamily complex" as any residential building, structure, or portion thereof consisting of ten or more units. It authorizes the Department to establish and maintain a state-wide multifamily residential housing database known as the Georgia Multifamily Complex Data Base, with the aim of providing information to connect residents with safe, decent, and affordable housing options. The database will include voluntarily provided information from multifamily complexes regarding rental unit availability, rent rates, qualifications for renters, amenities, surrounding area details, and ownership information. The Department is required to publish and maintain this database on its website, ensuring public accessibility and searchability. Additionally, the Department is empowered to establish rules for the database's development and management but is prohibited from including any information not voluntarily provided by the multifamily complex owners or managers.

*STATUS: House State Planning and Community Affairs Committee*

[SB 125](#) (James-35th) Repeals restrictions on rent regulation by local governments.  
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 501** (Silcox-53rd) Removes the age cap that applies to age discrimination claims in the state by making it apply to those age 40 years or older. The bill also allows a minor 14 years or older to be employed during school vacations for purposes of working in the care and maintenance of lawns, gardens, and shrubbery owned and leased by the employer of the minor, including the operation of equipment. The minor must be covered by an insurance plan for accident or sickness, or a workers' compensation plan. The bill preempts localities from requiring issuance of an employment certificate or a youth work permit as a condition of payment or requiring an employer to obtain an employment certificate from a minor. The commissioner of the Department of Labor is permitted to investigate the age of any minor employed, hear evidence, and require the production of relevant books and records.

*STATUS: Recommended to the House Industry and Labor Committee*

**HB 738** (Hilton-48th) Creates the Task Force on Workforce and Safety Net Integration, which is composed of nine members, within the Technical College System of Georgia. The task force will determine how state agencies and departments can improve workforce development programs or improve employment situations for workers, while also reviewing whether certain agencies should be merged to better accomplish those tasks. The task force is required to create an implementation strategy for an integrated delivery system and to consult with the commissioner of labor, the state school superintendent, and the commissioners of human services, community affairs, early care and learning, and public health. Members of the task force will serve without compensation, and the task force will stand abolished on December 31, 2025.

*STATUS: Recommended Do Pass by the House Industry and Labor Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.*

- HB 870** (Washburn-144th) Provides that Georgia shall at all times observe the standard time of the United States.
- STATUS: House State Planning and Community Affairs Committee*
- HB 880** (Ballard-147th) Allows military spouses to use an existing license in good standing from another state to obtain employment in Georgia.
- STATUS: House Regulated Industries Committee. The bill will be heard in Committee TODAY (Monday).*
- HB 887** (Thomas-65th) Prohibits the use of artificial intelligence in making certain decisions regarding insurance coverage, healthcare, or public assistance.
- STATUS: House Technology and Infrastructure Innovation Committee*
- HB 890** (Thomas-65th) Provides for protections against discrimination by artificial intelligence and automated decision tools.
- STATUS: House Technology and Infrastructure Innovation Committee*
- HB 923** (Taylor-92nd) Provides for issuance of a special license plate for individuals with a physical, mental, or neurological condition which impedes the ability to communicate, and for notation of such condition upon a driver's license.
- STATUS: House Motor Vehicles Committee*
- HB 940** (Jones-25th) establishes it as unlawful for a retail store to decline cash as a payment method for any goods or services offered for sale. It mandates that retail establishments utilizing self-operated kiosks must have at least one option within the store where cash transactions are accepted. However, exemptions are provided for venues with 2,500 or more attendees, airports with over 500 takeoffs and landings, fully autonomous stores, and wholesale clubs, relieving them from the requirement to accept cash.
- STATUS: Recommended Do Pass by the House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee. The bill rests in House Rules Committee.*
- HB 955** (Bruce-61st) Creates the Georgia Equity and Fairness Commission for examining the impact of chattel slavery on the descendants of chattel slavery and recommending appropriate remedies, therefore.
- STATUS: House State Planning and Community Affairs Committee*
- HB 964** (Scott-76th) Provides for ethics and inclusivity training for firefighters, paramedics, and cardiac technicians.

*STATUS: House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee*

**HB 968** (Schofield-63rd) Requires the establishment of blocked trust accounts for minors rendering artistic or creative services and for the Commissioner of Labor to investigate and determine conditions of employment of child performers prior to the commencement of such employment. The bill also provides for requirements related to blocked trust accounts for child performers, and for requirements related to such accounts for minors engaged in video content on online platforms.

*STATUS: House Industry and Labor Committee*

**HB 1002** (Camp-135th) Relating to lottery for education, so as to provide for redemption for successful play of bona fide coin operated amusement machines through gift cards at automated kiosks under certain conditions.

*STATUS: House Regulated Industries Committee*

**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.

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE.*

**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 1024** (Blackmon-146th) Repeals the limitation on the maximum percentage of net revenue allowed to be held in the Revenue Shortfall Reserve.

*STATUS: House Appropriations 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) Establishes on behalf of professional licensing boards under the jurisdiction of the office of the Secretary of State a continuing education tracking solution to monitor compliance of licensees with applicable continuing education requirements.

*STATUS: House Regulated Industries Committee. The bill will be heard in Committee TODAY (Monday).*

**HB 1113** (Reeves-99th) "Personal Privacy Protection Act" - Defines terms such as "nonprofit organization," "person," and "personal information." It prohibits public agencies from requiring individuals or nonprofit organizations to provide personal information, releasing such information publicly, or requesting lists of supported nonprofit organizations from contractors or grantees. The Act specifies exceptions to these prohibitions, such as court-issued warrants, litigation-related disclosures, and voluntary releases by individuals or nonprofit organizations. Personal information is not subject to open records regulations, with specific exemptions outlined. Violations of the Act can result in civil actions for damages, and willful violations may lead to treble damages and attorney's fees. The Act also addresses the potential misdemeanor charges for public agency employees who knowingly violate its provisions. Additionally, it amends Code Section 50-18-72 to include a new provision stating that certain information, including data and records, is exempt from public disclosure under Code Section 50-18-160.

*STATUS: House Governmental Affairs Committee*

**HB 1127** (Pirkle-169th) 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: House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee*

**HB 1128** (Lott-131st) "Georgia Women's Bill of Rights," - Emphasizes that "sex" refers to the biological state of being male or female, based on factors such as reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones, and genitalia at birth. The terms "female," "male," "woman," "man," "girl," and "boy" are defined accordingly. The legislation asserts that equal treatment in the context of sex doesn't imply identical treatment, and separate accommodations are not inherently unequal. The bill recognizes medically diagnosed disorders or differences in sex development and outlines legal protections for such individuals. It also specifies that laws distinguishing between sexes are subject to intermediate constitutional scrutiny. The legislation addresses distinctions in areas like athletics, living facilities, and restrooms, emphasizing that separate accommodations align with important governmental objectives of safeguarding health, safety, and privacy. Additionally, it requires local schools, public schools, and state entities collecting vital statistics to identify individuals as either male or female at birth for compliance with antidiscrimination laws and data accuracy purposes.

*STATUS: House Judiciary Committee*

**HB 1142** (Martin-49th) Removes the residency requirement for the issuance of licenses by endorsement for spouses of active or transitioning members of the armed forces, and any individual seeking licensure for a profession other than that of a firefighter, healthcare provider, or a law enforcement officer.



*STATUS: House Regulated Industries Committee*

**HB 1144** (Martin-49th) Changes certain requirements for the issuance of licenses by endorsement for spouses of active or transitioning members of the armed forces to conform to federal law; to conform certain requirements for license by endorsement for certain professions to those of spouses of active or transitioning members of the armed forces.

*STATUS: House Regulated Industries 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: House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee*

**HB 1171** (Burchett-176th) Exempts sales of clothing and school related supplies during the last two weeks of July each year.

*STATUS: House Ways and Means 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: House Regulated Industries Committee*

**HB 1208** (Schofield-63rd) Prohibits discrimination based on natural, protective, or cultural hairstyles.

*STATUS: House Industry and Labor Committee*

**HB 1278** (Moore-91st) Designates collard greens as the official state greens, with "potlikka" as the official state dipping sauce of the official state bread.

*STATUS: House Special 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 Education Committee*

**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 172** (Cowsert-46th) Authorizes and provides for the regulation and taxation of sports betting, overseen by the Georgia Lottery Corporation.

*STATUS: Recommended DO PASS by Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee. Currently TABLED in the Senate.*

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

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

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

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

**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: Senate Government Oversight Committee*

**SB 394** (Dixon-45th) "Restricting Explicit and Adult-designated Educational Resources (READER) Act" - Defines the terms "harmful to minors," "restricted materials," and "sexually explicit materials"; and requires the State Board of Education to establish standards for the designation of restricted materials by local boards of education, standards for the use and restriction of instructional materials, and standards for the use and restriction of public school library collection materials.

*STATUS: Senate Education and Youth Committee*

**SB 414** (Kennedy-18th) "Personal Privacy Protection Act" - Key provisions include the definition of terms such as "nonprofit organization," "person," and "personal information." The Act restricts public agencies from compelling personal information from individuals or nonprofit organizations, disclosing such information publicly, or requesting lists of nonprofit organizations from contractors or grantees. Exceptions include lawful warrants, discovery in litigation, and disclosures made voluntarily or required by statute. The Act provides for enforcement through civil actions and outlines penalties for willful violations, including treble damages and attorney's fees. It also criminalizes knowing violations by public agency employees. The amendments aim to safeguard personal privacy and limit the collection and disclosure of personal information by public agencies.

*STATUS: Senate Judiciary Committee*

**SB 433** (Cowsert-46th) "Donor Intent Protection Act" - Amends Georgia's nonprofit corporation provisions, introducing regulations related to charitable contributions with donor-imposed restrictions. It defines terms like 'charitable organization' and 'donor' and stipulates that a charitable organization must adhere to donor-imposed restrictions, allowing legal action by the donor or their representative if violations occur. The Act enables a civil action within six years of discovering a breach, and the court can issue remedies consistent with the charitable purposes specified in the endowment agreement, excluding the return of the contribution to the donor.

*STATUS: Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities 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: Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee*

**SB 458** (Parent-42nd) Requires the board of regents to adopt the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights.

*STATUS: Senate Government Oversight Committee*

**SB 489** (Goodman-8th) Designates the blueberry as the official state berry.

*STATUS: Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee*

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

*STATUS: Senate Science and Technology Committee*

**SR 538** (Summers-13th) Constitutional Amendment that authorizes and requires that the Georgia General Assembly provide by law for sports betting and casino gambling in this state by July 2, 2025; and for the regulation and allocation of revenues of such sports betting and casino gambling.

*STATUS: Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee*

**SR 579** (Cowsert-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: Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.*

## Advocacy Asks

Pick an ask!

- [Behavioral Health Workforce](#)
- [Out-of-School Time Funds and Liaison](#)
- [School-Based Mental Health](#)

### [Ask #1: Behavioral Health Workforce Bill](#)

#### [The Ask](#)

Ask members of the House Rules Committee to put House Bill 1077 on the House floor for a vote as soon as possible. This bill establishes a **student loan repayment program for behavioral health providers**.

#### [What Does HB 1077 Do?](#)

##### [HB 1077:](#)

- Establishes 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.
- The bill also requires the Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce to sponsor clinical behavioral health training programs at eligible institutions.

#### [Why It Matters](#)

In 2022, Georgia passed the sweeping Mental Health Parity Act (MHPA), which, among other things, requires the development of a cancellable loan program for behavioral health professionals. HB 1077 helps to fulfill this provision. Consider the demand:

- More than 96% of Georgia counties are [federally designated as Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas](#).
- 90 of Georgia's 159 counties do not have a psychiatrist.
- 47% of youth ages 3-17 had difficulty getting the mental health treatment or counseling that they needed and when they needed it.
- 68% of youth with major depression reported not receiving mental health services.

#### [What to Say](#)

Dear Representative,

Please vote in House Rules Committee to put House Bill 1077 on the House floor for a vote as soon as possible - before Crossover Day. This bill establishes a student loan repayment program for behavioral health providers. As you may know, more than 96% of Georgia counties are [federally designated as Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas](#), and 90 of Georgia's 159 counties do not have a psychiatrist. What's more, 47% of youth ages 3-17 had difficulty getting the mental health treatment or counseling that they needed and when they needed it. Thank you for your thoughtfulness on behalf of Georgia's children with regards to this bill.

**Who to Contact:**

<a href="#">Rep. Butch Parrish</a> , Chair, 404-463-2246	<a href="#">Rep. Carolyn Hugley</a> , 404-656-0109
<a href="#">Rep. Mandi Ballinger</a> , Vice Chair, 404-656-7153	<a href="#">Rep. Mack Jackson</a> , 404-656-7153
<a href="#">Rep. James Beverly</a> , 404-656-5058	<a href="#">Rep. Rick Jasperse</a> , 404-656-7153
<a href="#">Rep. Shaw Blackmon</a> , 404-656-5103	<a href="#">Rep. Jan Jones</a> , 404-656-5075
<a href="#">Rep. James Burchett</a> , 404-656-5025	<a href="#">Rep. David Knight</a> , 404-463-2248
<a href="#">Rep. John Carson</a> , 404-656-7855	<a href="#">Rep. Eddie Lumsden</a> , 404-656-7850
<a href="#">Rep. Sharon Cooper</a> , 404-656-5069	<a href="#">Rep. Chuck Martin</a> , 404-656-5146
<a href="#">Rep. Katie Dempsey</a> , 404-463-2248	<a href="#">Rep. Mark Newton</a> , 404-656-7853
<a href="#">Rep. Karla Drenner</a> , 404-656-0202	<a href="#">Rep. Sam Park</a> , 404-656-5059
<a href="#">Rep. Chuck Efstrotation</a> , 404-656-5052	<a href="#">Rep. Alan Powell</a> , 404-463-3793
<a href="#">Rep. Gerald Greene</a> , 404-656-9210	<a href="#">Rep. Lynn Smith</a> , 404-656-7149
<a href="#">Rep. Stan Gunter</a> , 404-656-5125	<a href="#">Rep. Ron Stephens</a> , 404-656-5115
<a href="#">Rep. Matt Hatchett</a> , 404-463-2245	<a href="#">Rep. Darlene Taylor</a> , 404-463-2246
<a href="#">Rep. Lee Hawkins</a> , 404-656-7855	<a href="#">Rep. Al Williams</a> , 404-656-6372
<a href="#">Rep. Bill Hitchens</a> , 404-656-5126	<a href="#">Rep. Bruce Williamson</a> , 404-656-5026
<a href="#">Rep. Scott Holcomb</a> , 404-656-6372	

**Ask #2: Out-of-School Time Funds and Liaison****The Ask**

Ask members of the House Appropriations Education Subcommittee to:

1. Fund afterschool and summer enrichment programs by re-upping the Georgia Dept. of Education's BOOST grant funding in the FY25 budget (suggested funding \$20 million a year); and,
2. Create an Out-of-School Time liaison position, preferably in the GaDOE to coordinate OST policy across the three state agencies that handle OST programs: GaDOE, Dept. of Human Services, and Dept. of Early Care and Learning.

**What's BOOST?**

For the last three years, GaDOE, in partnership with GSAN, used a total of \$85 Million in COVID relief funding to create the Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) grant program, which has funded evidence-based afterschool and summer learning programs. The federal funds for the program are about to expire, but the BOOST outcomes for kids have been amazing! *Therefore, in order to keep the progress for kids going*, Georgia needs to target dollars into more grants, which we are calling "BOOST 2.0".

**The Why**

The **BOOST 2.0 Grant Program**, (housed at the Georgia Department of Education) will build off the existing infrastructure and partnerships of BOOST. This will:

- Create a statewide framework that expands access to and assures quality of afterschool and summer learning opportunities.
- Prioritize funding support to OST programs that serve vulnerable youth, such as those who are economically disadvantaged, have a disability, and English language learners.
- Use existing state infrastructure to provide training and technical assistance to OST providers fiscal administration, quality measurement, program effectiveness, and provider leadership.

- Leverage program evaluation and evidence collection strategies embedded within the BOOST grant to determine how to best serve current and prospective afterschool and summer learning providers in the future.

An Interagency Liaison can coordinate afterschool and summer programming between the Georgia DECAL, DHS/DFCS, and GaDOE. If such a liaison is placed in Georgia Department of Education (Office of Whole Child Supports), efficiencies and communications can be maximized in

- Alignment and coordination of OST services provided to youth and families;
- Development of reliable protocols for interagency communication regarding implementation of similar youth enrichment programs;
- Streamlining of grant application and administration to help both large and small organizations; and
- Streamlining of training, technical assistance, and professional learning provided to organizations funded and/or licensed by the agencies.

[For more on OST Funding and Programs in GA, check out our Brief!](#)

### The Message:

Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_,

I have two requests related to afterschool and summer enrichment funding. First, please include money in the FY25 budget to continue the afterschool and summer enrichment funding known as BOOST (Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time) grants. Also, please include funding for an interagency out-of-school-time liaison at the GaDOE to coordinate the OST policies across the three state agencies that house programs and dollars related to out-of-school time programming (GaDOE, DHS, and DECAL). The federal COVID relief dollars that created BOOST are running out and BOOST has been key to student success in academic recovery, mental health, and child wellbeing. These programs are **crucial in helping working parents work without concerns about the safety and nurturing of their school-aged children**. PLUS, afterschool and summer enrichment activities **improve literacy and learning, youth mental health and behaviors, and vital career-ready skills**.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests and thank you for all you do every day on behalf of Georgia's children and families.

### Who to Contact:

House Appropriations Education Subcommittee Members:

[Rep. Matt Dubnik](#), 404-463-2246

[Rep. Leesa Hagan](#), 404-656-0325

[Rep. Kimberly Alexander](#), 404-656-7859

[Rep. Robert Dickey](#), 404-656-5099

[Rep. Chris Erwin](#), 404-656-0188

[Rep. Edna Jackson](#), 404-656-0265

[Rep. Jan Jones](#), 404-656-5072

[Rep. Todd Jones](#), 404-656-9210

[Rep. Will Wade](#), 404-651-7737

House Appropriations Chairman [Matt Hatchett](#), (404) 463-2247

### [Ask #3: School-Based Mental Health](#)

#### [The Ask](#)

Ask members of the House Appropriations Human Resources Subcommittee to fund the Georgia Apex Program at \$10 Million in the FY 2025 Budget (under the Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities).

#### [What is Apex?](#)

The successful Georgia Apex Program (Apex), funded by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), builds capacity and increases access to mental health services for school-aged youth, Pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade, throughout the state.

- Apex works as a satellite to existing providers (such as the local community service board), and takes traditional public and private insurance to cover costs, but still needs funds to start programs in new schools.
- Since its inception in 2015, the Georgia Apex Program has grown on average 19% per year in engaged schools and 40% in services provided. Yet over 66% of children in Georgia who have had a major depressive episode have not received mental health care.

To understand child and adolescent behavioral health needs, check out these additional factsheets:

- [School Based Mental Health Programs](#)
- [Crisis in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health](#)

#### [The Message:](#)

Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_,

Please appropriate \$10 Million to expand school based mental health, namely the Georgia Apex Program, to more schools so that we can start to serve the estimated 66% of children in Georgia who have had a major depressive episode have not received mental health care. Georgia Apex Program provides school-based access to mental health services for children Pre-K through 12th grade across the state. Last year alone, the program served more than 730 schools. The program, however, is in high demand. While Apex services are billed through public and private health insurance, start-up funds are needed to expand the program further to meet the demand. Thank you for your attention to this situation and for your service to the children and families of our great state.

#### [Who to Contact:](#)

House Human Resources Subcommittee

[Rep. Katie Dempsey](#), 404-463-2248, *Chair*  
[Rep. Karen Mathiak](#), 404-656-0213, *Vice Chair*  
[Rep. Victor Anderson](#), 404-656-0325  
[Rep. Teri Anulewicz](#), 404-656-0116  
[Rep. Matt Barton](#), 404-656-3947

[Rep. Mike Cameron](#), 404-656-0188  
[Rep. Emory Dunahoo](#), 404-656-7857  
[Rep. Mary Margaret Oliver](#), 404-656-0265  
[Rep. Steven Sainz](#), 404-657-1803

#### **Upcoming Events**

Tuesdays, Beginning January 16  
 Thursday, February 22 (THIS WEEK!)

Talk Justice Tuesdays  
 GEEARS Strolling Thunder



Tuesday, February 27, 5-7pm  
[more](#)

Reception in Celebration of Children, [Learn](#)

### Other Helpful Resources

- [Find Your Legislator](#)
- [Contact Your Legislator](#)
- [Voices' 2\(ish\) Minute Takes](#)
- [Voices' Factsheets](#)
- [Voices' Whole Child Primer, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition](#)