

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

March 11, 2024

One of the best unintended consequences of my job is all the random stuff I get to learn without even trying. Not only are the halls of the state house loaded up daily with a fantastic collection of humans of all shapes, sizes, colors, genders, ages, clothing tastes, hair-do's (and hair-don'ts), professions, and advocacy styles, but it is also loaded up with ideas, which oftentimes find themselves articulated in legislation. For instance, this past week, I spent a respectable amount of time listening to a hearing on a bill ([HB 827](#)) about penalizing people who decide to do amazingly stupid tik-tok-y-challenge things like jump into lion pens at the zoo or try to kiss a cougar (not *that* kind!) at a nature preserve. I learned that when things like that happen, in addition to whatever unfortunate outcome is meted upon the human by the animal, the animal usually gets euthanized, even though it is not really the animal's fault. And not only is capital punishment way yucky for an animal who was minding its own business, but it is pricey for the owner too. So, if this bill passes, it is the daredevil human who is penalized, charged with the offense of "criminal trespass involving a wild animal" (CTIWA). And while that alone is interesting, what I enjoyed even more was the part of the discussion clarifying that cow-tipping does not count as CTIWA, because 1. Cows are not considered "wild"; 2. They apparently don't get hurt in the process; and 3. It seemed a number of Senators had fond tipping memories from teenage-hood, and did not want to rob teens and teens-to-be of the same. (To which I thought, "See?! It seems like *every* bill has *something* to do with kids!") The committee recommended the bill Do Pass - but DON'T PASS the wildlife barriers at the zoo. So- all that to say, when you find yourself at the circus saying something like "Hey everybody! Watch this!", you could end up *without* an appendage, but *with* a felony.

--Polly

PS - Don't forget to take a walk on the Wild Side and act on our action alerts below!

## Jump to Section:

[FY25 Budget \(House Changes to the Governor's Recommendations\)](#)

[Justice, Public Safety, and School Discipline](#)

[Child Welfare and Protection](#)

[Health & Behavioral Health](#)

[Maternal & Infant Care](#)

[Early Childhood Education & Out-of-School Time](#)

[K-12 Education](#)

[Higher Education](#)

[Environmental Safety](#)

[Shelter & Nutrition](#)

[Miscellaneous](#)

[Advocacy Asks](#)

## Helpful Resources:

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

## Fiscal Year 2025 – Governor’s Recommendations

Total State Funds: \$36.09 Billion

Yellow highlight = House Changes to the Governor’s Recommendations

### Statewide

- Increase funds to provide for a 4% cost-of-living-adjustment for state employees not to exceed \$3,000
- Increase funds to provide an additional \$3,000 targeted salary enhancement for selected POST certified law enforcement officers
- Reduce funds to reflect an adjustment in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) from 65.89% to 66.04% (DBHDD, DCH/Medicaid LIM, DCH/PeachCare, DCH/GBHCW-GME, DHS/Adoption Services)
- Reduce funds to reflect an adjustment in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) from 65.89% to 60.04% (DCH/Medicaid ABD, DPH/Infant and Child Essential Health Treatment Services)
- Reduce funds to reflect an adjustment in the enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (eFMAP) from 76.12% to 76.23% (DHS/Dept. Admin, DHS/Out of Home Care)

### Judicial Council

- \$32,444 Added to annualize one Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) statewide coordinator position for the Council of Accountability Court Judges
- \$83,807 Added for personnel for one project coordinator position.
- \$209,500 Added for Civil Legal Services for families of indigent patients. (Governor recommended: \$419,000 added)

### Prosecuting Attorneys

- \$1.125 Million Transferred from the Prosecuting Attorney's Council program for the Prosecuting Attorneys Qualifications Commission program

### Juvenile Courts

- \$25,000 Added for grants to counties for the Atlantic Judicial Circuit
- \$25,000 Added for grants to counties for the Coweta Judicial Circuit
- \$218,000 Added for the Juvenile Court Judges' salary supplement pursuant to the General Appropriations for FY 2023 (HB 911)

### State Accounting Office

*Budget Direction:* Change program name from Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission to State Ethics Commission pursuant to HB 572 (2023 Session).

### Jump to Agency:

- [Dept. of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [Dept. of Community Affairs](#)
- [Dept. of Community Health](#)
- [Dept. of Community Supervision](#)
- [Dept. of Corrections](#)
- [Dept. of Defense](#)
- [Dept. of Early Care and Learning](#)
- [Dept. of Education](#)
- [Dept. of Human Services](#)
- [Office of the Commissioner of Insurance](#)
- [Georgia Bureau of Investigation](#)
- [Criminal Justice Coordinating Council](#)
- [Council of Accountability Court Judges](#)
- [Dept. of Juvenile Justice](#)
- [Dept. of Law](#)
- [Dept. of Public Health](#)
- [Dept. of Public Safety](#)
- [University System of Georgia Board of Regents](#)
- [Secretary of State](#)
- [Georgia Student Finance Commission](#)
- [Technical College System of Georgia](#)
- [Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission – Capital Projects Fund](#)

## Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities

### *Adult Developmental Disability Services*

- **\$9.38 Million Added** to annualize the cost of 500 New Options Waiver (NOW) and Comprehensive Supports Waiver Program (COMP) slots for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- **\$2.35 Million Added** for 100 additional slots for the New Options Waiver (NOW) and Comprehensive Supports Waiver Program (COMP) for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- **\$79.9 Million Recognized** agency-wide transfers (\$4,947,743) and increase funds (\$74,953,932) to implement the New Option Waiver (NOW) and Comprehensive Supports Option Waiver Program (COMP) provider rate study (Total Funds: \$161,342,037) (Governor's calculation resulted in total funds of \$316,462,570)
- **\$3.2 Million Added** to operationalize the Macon Crisis Stabilization Diagnostic Center for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- **\$108,000 Added** for adult autism services

### *Adult Forensic Services*

- **\$3.22 Million Added** to staff and operate a forensic step-down unit to address the statewide waitlist
- **\$2 Million Added** for an additional 30-bed jail-based competency restoration program pilot in Dodge County
- **\$1.25 Million Added** for the expansion of the Cobb County jail-based restoration program

### *Adult Mental Health Services*

- **\$9.48 Million Added** for a behavioral health crisis center in DBHDD's Region 1.
- **\$11.42 Million Reduced** to reflect decreased demand for core adult mental health services.
- **\$5.69 Million Added** to annualize the operations of a behavioral health crisis center in Fulton County. (Governor recommended: \$3.79 Million)
- **\$1.59 Million Added** to annualize the operations of a behavioral health crisis center for the Community Service Board of Middle Georgia in Dublin
- **\$1.22 Million Added** to annualize the operations of a behavioral health crisis center for Serenity Behavioral Health Systems in Augusta
- **\$825,000 Eliminated** (they were one-time funds) to coordinate outreach to address homelessness in the Atlanta area
- **\$26.66 Million Added** to match rate implementation of the Community Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (CBHRS) provider rate study for uninsured Georgians and transfer funds (\$4,227,287) from the Department of Community Health for Georgians covered by Medicaid.) (Governor recommended: \$22.43M added to match rate implementation of the Community Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (CBHRS) provider rate study for uninsured Georgians.)
- **\$300,000 Added** to support staffing of the '988' hotline
- **\$2.5 Million Added** for the Georgia Housing Voucher program to support the requirements of the Department of Justice (DOJ) Settlement Agreement
- **\$225,000 Added** for behavioral health services for Georgians experiencing homelessness in the Atlanta area
- **\$200,000 Added** for behavioral health and support services at a rehousing facility

### *Child and Adolescent Developmental Disabilities*

- **\$300,000 Added** to expand enrichment activities, family support, and employment opportunities for children and young adults with developmental disabilities
- **\$200,000 Added** for autism early screening and care training in rural counties

### *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services*

- **\$600,000 Eliminated** (they were one-time funds) for Georgia psychiatric residential treatment facilities receiving less than \$500 per patient day while under current cost report reimbursement methodology
- **\$225,975 Added** for operations of the new Gateway child and adolescent crisis stabilization unit in Savannah
- **\$2 Million Added** for the Georgia Apex Program to expand mental health services in schools

### ***Sexual Offender Risk Review Board***

- **\$532,357 Added** for two new evaluator positions to address the growth of the existing caseload backlog. (Governor recommended: \$212,943)

### **Dept. of Community Affairs**

- **\$1 Million Added** to create the accountable housing initiative
- **\$3.8 Million Added** plus existing funds (\$800,000) and transferred funds from State Community Development Programs (\$400,000) for the State Housing Trust Fund to improve homelessness services and pursue new federal grant opportunities. (Total Funds: \$4,597,416)
- Use Existing Funds (\$6 Million) for the Rural Workforce Housing Program

### **Dept. of Community Health**

#### ***Departmental Administration***

- **\$1.53 Million Added** for 20 positions to monitor, evaluate, and improve Care Management Organization oversight
- **\$1.37 Million Reduced** for savings resulting from the implementation of the Medicaid Enterprise System Transformation Program

#### ***Health Care Access and Improvement***

- **\$2 Million Eliminated** (they were one-time funds) for grants up to \$1,000,000 for hospitals with graduate medical education programs (Governor recommended: \$4 Million Eliminated)
- **\$500,000 Eliminated** one-time start-up funding for federally qualified health centers
- **\$750,000 Added** for three federally qualified health center start-up grants for primary care in Union County, behavioral health expansion in Cobb County, and a dental service expansion for multiple counties
- **\$2.81 Million Added** for continuous glucose monitors (SB 35, 2024 Session)
- **\$292,000** Recognized existing funds (\$409,000) and provide additional funds to sustain existing area health education centers (AHEC) housing across the state
- **\$250,000 Added** for emergency equipment
- **\$2 Million Added** for rural hospital stabilization grants

#### ***Medicaid - Aged Blind and Disabled***

- **\$21.59 Reduced** for growth in Medicaid based on projected utilization (Governor recommended: **ADDING \$68.44 Million**)
- **\$137.72 Million Restored** to reflect the termination of temporary Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) increase provided by the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) Extension through December 31, 2023
- **\$141.59 Million Added** for skilled nursing centers to reflect 2022 cost reports (Governor recommended: **adding \$118.18 Million**)
- Replace \$2,541,738 in state general funds with hospital provider fees
- Replace \$201,221 in state general funds with nursing home provider fees
- **\$0 State dollars added** but instead, transfer state funds (\$4,227,287) to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities and recognize federal funds (\$45,509,162) for the

implementation of the Community Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (CBHRS) provider rate study. (Governor recommended: adding \$4.23 Million for the same purpose)

- Recognize funds for the New Option Waiver (NOW) and Comprehensive Supports Option Waiver Program (COMP) provider rate study. (in federal funds totaling \$155.12 Million)
- \$8 Million Added for the Georgia Pediatric Program (GAPP).
- Budget Direction: The department shall evaluate and implement a reimbursement policy for the clinically appropriate administration of long-acting injectable medications used in an inpatient setting, to improve the coordination of care and reduce inpatient readmission rates for individuals with serious mental illness.
- \$3.13 Million Added to increase reimbursement rates for speech-language pathology, audiology, physical therapy, and occupational therapy providers.
- \$220,084 Added to increase the dispensing fee to \$11.50 for independent low-volume pharmacies that fill under 65,000 prescriptions per year.
- \$3.81 Million Added for adult coverage of dental services.
- \$1.59 Million Added for emergency medical service (EMS) transport reimbursement to begin at mile 0.
- \$2.29 Million Added to increase select primary care and OB/GYN codes.
- \$64,947 Added rate increases for select optometric codes.

### Medicaid - Low Income

- \$111.46 Million Reduced for Medicaid based on projected utilization. (Governor recommended: \$104.16 reduction)
- \$135.04 Million Restored to reflect the termination of temporary Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) increase provided by the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) Extension through December 31, 2023.
- Replace \$22,875,637 in state general funds with hospital provider fees.
- Budget Direction: The department shall evaluate and implement a reimbursement policy for the clinically appropriate administration of long-acting injectable medications used in an inpatient setting, to improve the coordination of care and reduce inpatient readmission rates for individuals with serious mental illness.
- \$1.24 Million Added for reimbursement of Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTAs) and Physical Therapy Assistants (PTAs) providing services for Medicaid members receiving Children's Intervention Services (CIS) and Children's Intervention School Services. (CISS).
- \$428,745 Added to increase the dispensing fee to \$11.50 for independent low-volume pharmacies that fill under 65,000 prescriptions per year.
- \$5.84 Million Added for adult coverage of dental services.
- \$1.81 Million Added for emergency medical service (EMS) transport reimbursement to begin at mile 0.
- \$6.11 Million Added to increase select primary care and OB/GYN codes.
- \$327,226 Added for rate increases for select optometric codes.
- \$283,995 Added to evaluate and, where appropriate, implement a process to allow reimbursement for blood and biomarker testing when clinically indicated so as to provide enhanced surveillance for inpatient pregnant patients between 23-34 weeks with hypertensive disorder of pregnancy.

### PeachCare for Kids®

- \$22.85 Million Added for growth in Medicaid based on projected utilization. (Governor recommended: \$2.33 Million addition)
- \$624,566 Restored to reflect the termination of temporary Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) increase provided by the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) extension through December 31, 2023.

- **\$93,500 Added** for reimbursement of Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTAs) and Physical Therapy Assistants (PTAs) providing services for Medicaid members receiving Children's Intervention Services (CIS) and Children's Intervention School Services (CISS).

### ***State Health Benefits Plan***

- *Budget Direction:* Recognize an increase in formula funds (\$244,147,056) in the Department of Education, Department of Early Care and Learning, and Georgia Military College, to reflect an increase in the employer healthcare contribution per-member per-month (PMPM) rate for certified school employees and lead and assistant teachers to \$1,760, effective July 1, 2024.
- *Budget Direction:* Increase the employer health care contribution per-member per-month (PMPM) for non-certified school employees to match the PMPM for certified school employees, effective January 1, 2027.

### ***GA Board of Healthcare Workforce***

- \$100,000 of existing funds used for statewide healthcare specialty assessments to evaluate gaps in healthcare services.

### ***Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce: Graduate Medical Education***

- **\$2.01 Million Added** for 105 new residency slots in primary care. (*Governor recommended: \$1.49 Million Added for 79 new residency slots in primary care medicine.*)
- **\$56,757 Added** for a rural public health preventative medicine rotation.
- **\$50,000 Added** one-time start-up funds for the development of a Pediatric Rural Training Track.
- **\$150,000 Added** for year two of the maternal fetal medicine fellowship.
- **\$750,000 Added** for one-time start-up funds for OB/GYN service expansion.
- **\$550,000 Added** one-time start-up funds for two internal medicine residency programs.
- **\$150,000 Eliminated** in residency start-up funds for Southern Regional Medical Center.

### ***Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce: Mercer School of Medicine Grant***

- **\$850,055 Added** for the fifth year of the seven-year plan for Mercer School of Medicine's medical school campus in Columbus.
- **\$1.23 Million Added** to increase the class size of Mercer's Accelerated Track.

### ***Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce: Morehouse School of Medicine Grant***

- **\$500,000 Added** for infant mortality research.

### ***Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce: Physicians for Rural Areas***

- **\$900,000 Added** for additional loan repayment for Dentists in Rural Areas.

### **Dept. of Community Supervision**

- **\$831,195 Added** for 12 community supervision aide positions (*Governor recommended: \$1.73 Million Added for 25 community supervision aide positions.*)
- **\$527,905 Added** for 7 community coordinator positions. (Governor's Office of Transition Support and Reentry)

### **Dept. of Corrections**

- **\$3.42 Million Added** across the agency for operational costs at facilities statewide.
- \$6.13 Million total from Transfer funds from Offender Management program (\$3,551,094) and Added funds (\$2,574,744) for a recruitment advertising campaign and work culture review.
- **\$1.23 Million Added** to provide additional meals on weekends

- \$71.97 Million Added for physical health and pharmacy service contracts.

### ***Private Prisons***

- \$6.96 Million Added to provide 200 temporary additional beds at Coffee and Wheeler facilities to allow for maintenance and repairs at state prisons.

### ***State Prisons***

- \$240,427 Added for Technical College System of Georgia vocational education contracts. (Governor recommended: \$172,200 Added)
- \$1 Million Added for offender call monitoring at facilities, statewide.
- \$331,000 Added for radio communications at facilities, statewide.
- \$17.54 Million Added for capital maintenance and repairs.
- \$1.82 Million Reduced for closing HR recruitment centers in favor of increased advertising.
- \$2.93 Million Reduced for replacing Basic Correctional Officer Training paper books with Chromebooks.

### ***Transition Centers***

- \$10 Million Added for six months of operational cost for the Metro Re-Entry Phase IV to add 400 transition center beds.

### **Dept. of Defense**

- \$123,930 Reduced to reflect lower graduation rates.

### **Dept. of Early Care and Learning**

#### ***Child Care Services***

- \$4.63 Million Added to raise Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) reimbursement to the 50th percentile of market rates for childcare providers in accordance with federal regulation.

#### ***Pre-K Program***

- \$1.26 Million Added in formula funds for teacher training and experience.
- \$2.41 Million Added in formula funds to reflect an increase in health insurance employer contribution per-member per-month (PMPM) rate for certified teachers at public Pre-K providers to \$1,760 effective July 1, 2024.
- \$24.99 Million Added to adjust the state base salary schedule to increase salaries for certified Pre-K teachers and assistant teachers by \$2,500. (Governor recommended: \$23.56 Million Added)
- \$9.51 Million Added for year one of a four-year phase in to reduce classroom size from 22 to 20 students to improve instructional quality. (Governor recommended: \$10.97 Million Added)
- \$8.97 Million Added to expand the Summer Transition Program with income eligibility requirements. (Governor recommended: \$6.14 Million Added)
- \$383,311 Added for three Pre-Kindergarten administrative positions.

### **Dept. of Education**

#### ***Agency-wide***

- Adjust the state base salary schedule to increase salaries for certified teachers and certified employees by \$2,500 effective September 1, 2024.
- Used formula funds to reflect an increase in health insurance employer contribution per-member per-month (PMPM) rate for certified school employees to \$1,760 effective July 1, 2024

#### ***Agricultural Education***

- \$192,000 Added for two young farmer positions in Barrow and Peach counties.

### **Central Office**

- \$50,000 Removed (it was one-time funding) for study and host meetings with House and Senate committees and stakeholders concerning Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS) formula funding.
- \$200,000 Added for adaptive sports program.

### **Charter Schools**

- \$1.7 Million Reduced to align with budget expenditures.
- \$2.7 Million Reduced for facilities grants to reflect the full \$100,000 for each locally-approved charter schools, pursuant to HB 430 (2017 Session)

### **Communities in Schools**

- \$1.58 Million Added to leverage matching grant funds for program expansion.

### **Curriculum Development**

- \$6.3 Million Added to support evidence-based reading instruction grants to fund two Literacy Coaches per Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) and provide \$2,000 supplements to Literacy Support Coordinators and Leads at school districts.
- \$177,000 Added for life sciences industry certification.
- \$4.92 Million Transferred in existing funds for AP and PSAT exams from the Testing program to properly align with department administration.
- \$319,000 Added for one STEM International Baccalaureate exam to all students and one International Baccalaureate exam for free and reduced-paying lunch students.
- \$1 Million Added for computer science professional development to support SB 108 (2019 Session).

### **Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS)**

- \$4.26 Million Reduced in formula funds for enrollment and training and experience decline. (Governor recommended: \$2.07 Million Reduced)

### **Non-Quality Basic Education (Non-QBE) Formula Grants**

- \$8.5 Million Transferred from the Quality Basic Education program to provide salary supplements of \$1,000 to all custodians and adjust amount to reflect current count.
- \$1.52 Million Added for Dyslexia Screening pursuant to SB 48 (2019 Session).
- \$389,615 Reduced in formula funds for Residential Treatment Facilities based on attendance. (Governor recommended: \$518,446 reduction)
- \$255,709 Added in formula funds for Sparsity Grants based on enrollment data.
- \$750,000 Added for a mentorship program to increase teacher retention rates.
- \$362,000 Added for one-time grant funds for CPR training and equipment for student health and safety.

### **Nutrition**

- \$6.33 Million Reduced to align budget with expenditures.
- \$6.33 Million Added for the cost of breakfast and lunch for reduce-paying students.
- \$2 Million Added in formula funds for school nutrition.
- \$1.35 Million Added in formula funds to recognize a 4.1% increase to the salary earnings in the nutrition formula.

### **Preschool Disability Services**



- \$7.12 Million Added based on formula earnings.

### ***Pupil Transportation***

- \$204.79 Million Added for pupil transportation to provide additional state support for school districts statewide by reflecting updated bus count and 40% of operational costs.
- \$5.01 Million Added in formula funds to recognize a 4.1% increase to the salary earnings in the pupil transportation formula.

### ***Quality Basic Education Equalization***

- \$266.97 Million Added in formula funds for Equalization grants.

### ***QBE Local Five Mill Share***

- \$183.87 Million Reduced for the Local Five Mill Share. (Governor recommended: \$185.1 Million reduction)

### ***Quality Basic Education Program***

- \$42.82 Million Added for the State Commission Charter School supplement. (Governor recommended: \$49.5 Million Added)
- \$1.42 Million Reduced in formula funds for differentiated pay for newly certified math and science teachers. (Governor recommended: \$1.73 Million reduced)
- \$6.3 Million Added in formula funds for the Completion Special Schools supplement pursuant to HB 87 (2023 Session). (Governor recommended: \$6.35 Million Added)
- \$301,659 Added in formula funds for the charter system grant.
- \$8.64 Million Transferred to the Non-Quality Basic Education Formula Grants

### ***Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs)***

- \$396,624 Added for a 4.1% salary increase for certified staff.

### ***School Nurse***

- \$569,505 Reduced in formula funds for school nurses.
- \$1.54 Million Added for a 4.1% salary increase for school nurses.

### ***School Security Grants***

- \$104 Million Added to establish school security grants

### ***State Schools***

- \$263,962 Added in formula funds for training and experience.
- Budget Direction: Utilize existing funds (\$2,000,000) for major repairs and renovations.

### ***Technology/Career Education***

- \$711,000 Reduced to align budget with expenditures.
- \$2 Million Added for construction industry certification.
- \$1.5 Million Added for three heavy equipment simulators at ten schools.

### ***Testing***

- \$5.02 Million Added to provide a universal reading screener for all K-3 students pursuant to HB 538 (2023 Session).

## Governor's Office of Student Achievement

- **\$82,000 Reduced** to reflect current state agreements for erasure analysis.
- **\$250,000 Reduced** to align budget with expenditures.

## Dept. of Human Services

### *Child Support Services*

- **\$1.1 Million Added** for a \$3,000 additional salary enhancement for child support workers.
- **\$203,611 Added** for prosecution to support recruitment and retention needs.

### *Child Welfare Services*

- **\$214,146 Added** for the full cost of two community action team pilot programs funded by HB 911 (2022 Session).
- **\$1.42 Million Transferred** funds from Elder Abuse Investigations and Prevention (\$590,000) and increase funds (\$828,935) for technology upgrades and improvements to the SHINES child welfare case management system to enhance efficiency.
- **\$4.66 Million Added** to provide a \$3,000 additional salary enhancement for child protection and placement services caseworkers.
- **\$1 Million Added** for the court appointed special advocates (CASA) to enhance statewide capacity.
- **\$1.5 Million Added** for child advocacy centers to expand mental health services and forensic interviewing for children who have experienced abuse, neglect, exploitation, and trafficking.

### *Federal Eligibility Benefit Services*

- **\$2.06 Million Added** for labor and wage data verification services.
- **\$630,057 Added** for 23 county customer service staff to provide staff in every customer service center.

### *Out-of-Home Care Services*

- **\$8.38 Million Added** for a 3% provider rate increase for Child Caring Institutions, Child Placing Agencies, foster parents, and relative caregivers.

### *Out-of-School Care Services*

- **\$2.66 Million Eliminated** for one-time funding to bridge the education gap. (Governor recommended: \$1 Million Eliminated)

### *Residential Child Care Licensing*

- **\$134,618 Added** to establish an application and inspection process for Qualified Residential Treatment Programs.

### *Family Connection*

- **\$1.19 Million Added** to increase operational support and each county's allocation to \$60,000.

### *Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency: Vocational Rehabilitation Program*

- **\$1.09 Million Added** for independent living services.

### *Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund Commission*

- **\$4.75 Million Added** for the full cost of the Gwinnett Commercial Sexual Exploitation Recovery Center funded by HB 19 (2023 Session).
- **\$100,000 Added** for a psychiatric nurse to support youth survivors of exploitation and trafficking.

## Office of the Commissioner of Insurance

- **\$21.4 Million Added** for the state reinsurance program. (Governor recommended: \$20 Million Added)

## Georgia Bureau of Investigation

- **\$1.33 Million Added** for six death investigation specialists, one forensic photographer, one quality manager, one business support analyst supervisor, and one business support analyst in the Medical Examiner's Office to address increased workload.
- **\$307,746 Added** to add two criminal intelligence analyst positions to support the Criminal Street Gang Database. (Governor recommended: \$221,874 Added)
- **\$4.87 Million Added** for nine special agents, two digital forensic investigators, two criminal intelligence analyst, and one office manager and associated cost for the GBI Gang Task Force in Columbus to combat crime.
- **\$1.15 Million Added** to provide targeted retention initiatives for 229 crime lab scientists.

## Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

- **\$4.73 Million Reduced** to align budget with expenditures.
- **\$1.25 Million Transferred** from Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to the Georgia Public Safety Training Center for School Resource Officer and De-escalation training.
- **\$2.77 Million Added** for personal services and operating expenses to promote the stability of the Georgia Crime Victims Emergency Fund.

## Council of Accountability Court Judges

- **\$1.92 Million Added** for existing accountability courts to support population growth. (Governor recommended: \$964,892 Added)
- **\$585,987 Added** to add one DUI court, two mental health courts, one drug court, and one juvenile drug court. (Governor recommended: \$246,697 Added for one DUI court and one Mental Health court)

## *Family Violence*

- **\$1 Million Reduced** to align budget with expenditures.
- **\$14.7 Million Added** for domestic violence shelters for administrative personnel and facility costs related to compliance with state standards.
- **\$2.07 Million Added** for sexual assault centers for administrative personnel and facility costs related to compliance with state standards.
- **\$4.01 Million Added** for sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) coordinators and improve access to SANE resources for sexual assault centers.
- **\$895,785 Added** for six sexual assault centers (\$325,740) and 21 satellite sexual assault centers (\$570,045).

## Dept. of Juvenile Justice

- Agency-wide: Increase funds to provide a new benchmark for juvenile correctional officers (JCO1) at \$40,040 to create parity with correctional officers.
- **\$4.34 Million Added** to provide an additional \$3,000 targeted salary enhancement for selected POST certified law enforcement officers.
- **\$595,655 Added** to adjust the state base salary schedule to increase salaries for certified teachers and certified employees by \$2,500 effective September 1, 2024.
- **\$3.61 Million Reduced** to reflect regular operating and contract efficiencies.
- **\$558,960 Added** for a 3% provider rate increase to Child Caring Institutions.

## *Secure Confinement (Youth Detention Centers – YDCs)*

- **\$0 Added** for mobile tablets for a new pilot electronic grievance system in one Department of Juvenile Justice Secure Commitment (YDC) and one Secure Detention (RYDC) facility. (Governor recommended: **\$3,000 Added**)
- **\$600,000 Added** for the creation of new mobile labs at three Secure Commitment (YDC) facilities through the Technical College System of Georgia.
- **\$148,282 Added** for new body cameras.
- **\$4.8 Million Added** for capital maintenance and repairs.

#### ***Secure Confinement (Residential Youth Detention Centers – RYDCs)***

- **\$427,346 Added** for body cameras.
- **\$0 Added** for mobile tablets for a new pilot electronic grievance system in one Department of Juvenile Justice Secure Commitment (YDC) and one Secure Detention (RYDC) facility. (Governor recommended: **\$3,000 Added**)
- **\$9.81 Million Added** for capital maintenance and repairs.

#### **Dept. of Law**

- **\$822,411 Added** to expand the Gang Prosecution Unit to Columbus, Macon, and Savannah regions. (Governor recommended: **\$807,312 Added**)

#### **Dept. of Public Health**

##### ***Adolescent and Adult Health Promotion***

- **\$908,522 Added** to expand the visiting hematologist program.
- **\$796,000 Added** for outreach and breast cancer screening services.

##### ***Epidemiology***

- **\$765,528 Added** for the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program to monitor the prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances.
- **\$358,931 Added** for the Georgia Poison Center.

##### ***Infant and Child Essential Health Treatment Services***

- **\$1.75 Million Added:** Utilize existing funds (\$685,903) and increase funds to expand the pilot to provide home visiting in at-risk and underserved rural communities during pregnancy and early childhood to improve birth outcomes, reduce preterm deliveries, and decrease infant and maternal mortality. (Total Funds: \$1,752,000) (Governor recommended: **\$314,097 Added plus existing funds (\$685,903)**)
- **Budget Direction:** Utilize existing funds (\$118,939) for one epidemiologist position for surveillance and data analysis for the Low THC Oil Registry Program
- **\$456,468 Added** to increase reimbursement rates for speech-language pathology, audiology, physical therapy, and occupational therapy providers in the Babies Can't Wait program.

##### ***Infant and Child Health Promotion***

- **\$978,639 Added** for newborn screening to include two additional disorders that have been approved by the Georgia Newborn Screening Advisory Committee.

##### ***Infectious Disease Control***

- **\$150,611 Added** for one congenital syphilis and HIV case manager position to link cases identified during pregnancy and delivery to testing and treatment resources.

##### ***Inspections and Environmental Hazard Control***

- **\$235,074 Eliminated** (they were one-time funds) for lead inspection start-up costs and testing machines.

## ***Georgia Trauma Care Network Commission***

- **\$2.5 Million Added** to initiate a multi-year plan to stabilize the trauma network.

## **Dept. of Public Safety**

### ***Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council***

- **\$647,000 Added** for the Georgia POST Resiliency Program previously funded through the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Law Enforcement Training Grant.
- **\$0 Added** for system maintenance support and onboarding for an online gang and human trafficking training system. (*Governor recommended: \$20,000 Added*)

## **University System of Georgia Board of Regents**

### ***Public Libraries***

- **\$177,605 Added** for the public libraries' formula based on an increase in the state population.

### ***Public Service/Special Funding Initiatives***

- **\$1.5 Million Added** to establish the David Ralston Center for Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities at the University of Georgia to build the workforce of professionals and provide a clearinghouse for research.

### ***Teaching***

- **\$2.92 Million Added** to reflect a 0.8% decrease in enrollment with an increase in higher cost program areas (\$2,256,373) and 0.2% increase in square footage (\$658,999).
- **\$66 Million Restored** FY 2024 formula funds for Teaching.

### ***Payments to Georgia Military College Preparatory School***

- **\$148,613 Added** for enrollment, training, and experience.
- **\$45,000 Added** for a school security grant.

## **Secretary of State**

### ***Investigations***

- **\$405,434 Added** for four criminal investigators due to increased volume of elections and licensing board investigations.

### ***Professional Licensing Boards***

- **\$2.13 Million Added** for 21 licensing technicians, one process improvement analyst, one licensing and renewal assistant, two IT positions, one administrative assistant, and one business analyst, as well as related equipment and hourly temporary employees to address backlogs while onboarding new employees.

## **Georgia Student Finance Commission**

### ***Adult Learner High-Demand Field Scholarship***

- **\$500,000 Added** to establish an adult learner scholarship program assisting Georgia residents of two years or more to complete their bachelor's degree in a high-demand field utilizing competency-based learning models or other such models designed to meet the needs of the working adult learner.

### ***College Completion Grants***

- \$2 Million Reduced for College Completion Grants.

#### ***Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) Grant***

- \$1.64 Million Added to meet projected need.

#### ***Dual Enrollment***

- \$15.09 Million Added to meet projected enrollment.

#### ***HERO Scholarship***

- \$300,000 Reduced funds and utilize surplus funds to meet the projected need.

#### ***HOPE Grant***

- \$20.73 Million Reduced to reflect expected program expenditure.

#### ***HOPE High School Equivalency Exam***

- \$845,510 Reduced to reflect expected program expenditure.

#### ***HOPE Scholarships – Private Schools***

- \$16.44 Million Reduced to reflect expected program expenditures at a HOPE Private Award rate at \$2,496 and a HOPE Zell Private Award rate at \$2,985.

#### ***HOPE Scholarships – Public Schools***

- \$12.29 Million Reduced to reflect expected program expenditures at a 100% factor rate. (Governor recommended: \$9.11 Million Reduced)

#### ***Low Interest Loans***

- Budget Direction: Reduce funds and eliminate program to reflect cessation of further loan originations.

#### ***Service Cancelable Loans***

- Budget Direction: Recognize existing funds (\$3,200,000) to provide up to \$20,000 maximum loan repayments across five years of service to support recruitment and retention of public law enforcement officers.

#### **Technical College System of Georgia**

##### ***Quick Start***

- \$46 Million Reduced (they were one-time funds) for construction to complete Rivian training center.
- \$4.75 Million Added to meet existing training obligations.

##### ***Technical Education***

- \$9.43 Million Added to reflect a 3.0% increase in enrollment (\$8,988,608) and 0.7% increase in square footage (\$444,954).
- \$1.1 Million Reduced to align budget with expenditures.
- Budget Direction: In conjunction with the Office of Planning and Budget and House and Senate budget offices, the Technical College System of Georgia shall conduct a review of the current formula rates and program expense for the Technical Education program to ensure that the funding formula reflects costs to provide instruction and determine whether additional clusters are needed to better reflect needs of high-cost programs.

##### ***Workforce Development***

- \$322,000 Added for two new positions to provide regionally based consultation and technical assistance to healthcare partners across the state.

## **Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission – Capital Projects Fund**

### ***Dept. of Education***

- \$25.47 Million Added for Low Wealth for local school construction.
- \$21.19 Million Added for Additional Low Wealth for local school construction. (Governor recommended: \$22.2 Million added)
- \$181.76 Million Added for Regular for local school construction. (Governor recommended: \$182.08 Million added)
- \$6.91 Million Added for Regular Advance for local school construction.
- \$7.32 Million Added to Purchase vocational and agriculture education equipment. (Governor recommended: \$10.96 Million added)
- \$7.08 Million Added for Major repairs and renovations for state schools.
- \$20 Million Added for Purchase school buses.

### ***Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities***

- \$8.75 Million Added Hospital Campus Urgent and Significant Needs Prioritized According to the GSFIC Campus Survey

### ***GA Bureau of Investigation***

- \$40.1 Million Added for construction of Medical Examiner Annex Addition, Decatur, DeKalb County.

### ***Dept. of Juvenile Justice***

- \$1.8 Million Added for additional design fees for a 56-bed facility expansion, Macon, Bibb County.
- \$1.8 Million Added for additional design fees for a 48-bed facility expansion, Milledgeville, Baldwin County.
- \$52 Million Added for construction of 48-bed facility expansion, Milledgeville, Baldwin County.
- \$2.3 Million Added for major repair and renovation.
- \$3.8 Million Added for Land acquisition and design for new 56-bed facility, Gwinnett County.

### ***Georgia Environmental Finance Authority:***

- \$15 Million Added for the state match for the federal Clean Water and Drinking Water Revolving Loan Programs.

**\*\*Please note that this update only includes bills that have crossed over, are brand new, or are potential study committees.\*\***



## Justice, Public Safety, & School Discipline

**HB 500** (Silcox-53rd) Creates the offense of arson of a law enforcement vehicle. Any person convicted of the offense is punished by a fine up to \$100,000 or by imprisonment for a minimum of five years with a maximum of 20 years, or both.

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

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

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

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee.*

[HB 996](#) (Vance-133rd) Authorizes jailers who have been certified by the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Council as having successfully completed the course of training required by the 'Georgia Peace Officers Standards and Training Act' to arrest any person in violation of a criminal law which occurs in the jail or within the perimeter of jail guard lines. The jailer may also arrest anyone who has a complaint or arrest warrant pending and surrenders themselves.

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee.*

[HB 1201](#) (Gaines-120th) Allows a victim of human trafficking to have their sentence vacated when sentenced pursuant to O.C.G.A. 42-8-60, relating to probation, or O.C.G.A. 16-13-2, relating to conditional discharge of possession of controlled substances as a first offense, so long as the crime was a direct result of being a victim of human trafficking.

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee.*

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee.*

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Appropriations Committee.*

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

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

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

*STATUS: PASSED SENATE. The bill will be heard in committee TUESDAY.*

[SB 169](#) (Payne-54th) Provides for limits on the extension of hearing dates for student discipline tribunals and requires local school systems to provide appropriate grade-level instructional materials to any student subject to in-school suspension, short-term suspension, or long-term suspension pending completion of the student discipline tribunal.

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

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

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

[SB 407](#)

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

*STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee.*

[SB 453](#)

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

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

[SB 490](#)

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

*STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee.*

[SB 517](#)

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

*STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee. The bill will be heard in subcommittee this WEDNESDAY.*

[SB 533](#)

(Strickland-17th) Provides for jail-based competency restoration programs.

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

[SB 570](#)

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

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

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

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

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee.*

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

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

**HB 409** (Hitchens-161st) Provides a court the discretion to require either one spouse, or both spouses, to pay child support for a disabled child who has become an adult but lacks the ability to take care of themselves independently. The spouses can be in a divorce proceeding, living separately, or in a state of separation. A "disabled child" is defined to be an individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities and that meets a disability under state or federal law. The bill allows for modification of the award for child support if there has been a substantial change in the child's or parent's ability to provide support for themselves. The court can direct one or both parents to maintain life insurance for the benefit of a disabled child who has become an adult but lacks the ability to take care of themselves independently.

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

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

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

**HB 910** (Jasperse-11th) Delineates crucial terms pertinent to regulating material deemed harmful to minors on public websites by commercial entities. Defines "commercial entity" broadly, encompassing various legally recognized entities such as corporations, partnerships, or sole proprietorships; clarifies the concept of a "digitized identification card" as a data file accessible on mobile devices, mirroring the details found on physical driver's licenses or ID cards, along with indicating the card's current status; and defines "distribute" to encompass actions like issuing, selling, or providing material through any means. The bill also outlines what constitutes "material harmful to minors," including content that, according to contemporary community standards, appeals to prurient interest, depicts explicit sexual acts, or lacks serious value for minors. It defines "publish" as the act of making information available to others on a public website. The bill establishes the threshold for a "substantial portion" of harmful material on a public website, exceeding 33.33% of the total content, and mandates that commercial entities must implement reasonable age verification methods before allowing access to public websites containing a substantial portion of harmful material. Acceptable verification methods include submitting digitized identification cards, government-issued IDs, or commercially reasonable methods meeting specific standards. Failure to comply renders commercial entities liable for damages resulting from minors accessing harmful material, subject to fines up to \$10,000 per violation. Proceedings to impose fines must be initiated within one year of the violation by relevant legal authorities.

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee.*

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee.*

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee.*

**HB 1090** (Newton-127th) amends O.C.G.A. 48-7-29.24, relating to tax credits for contributions to foster child support organizations, to expand qualified expenditures for the credit to include wraparound services for aging foster children and justice involved youth that meet one of the following: are enrolled in a public postsecondary education institution; enrolled in a program to obtain a high school diploma or equivalent; enrolled in a vocation school; or participating in a registered and compliant apprenticeship program. The bill defines "aging foster children" as former foster children up to the age of 21 who were either in foster care for at least six months after the age of 14 and were not adopted or reunited with family by the age of 18; adopted after the age of 14; or in foster care for at least six months after the age of 14 and meet the definition of "homeless children and youths" or qualify by reason of low income for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). HB 1090 defines "justice involved youth" as between the ages of 18 and 21 who are currently or previously committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice and were placed, or are currently placed, in a nonsecure facility or community setting. The bill includes mentorship services provided to justice involved youth as a qualified expense. The annual compensation threshold to receive the credit is increased from \$500 to \$1,200 per year, and payments made to employees of a qualified mentorship organization that provide services other than mentorship are a qualified expense. The bill adds business enterprises, defined as an insurance company required to pay the tax provided for in O.C.G.A. 33-8-4, to be eligible for the credit for qualified expenditures related to wraparound services. HB 1090 authorizes the tax commissioner to share information necessary to efficiently administer and enforce provisions when another state agency has statutory authority to administer such tax credits.

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Finance Committee.*

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

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

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee.*

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

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

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

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

**SB 230** (Brass-28th) Revises provisions relating to the foster parents' bill of rights and include relative caregivers and fictive kin as parties to those rights.

*STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Juvenile Justice Committee. The bill will be heard in committee this TUESDAY.*

**SB 336** (Albers-56th) Safeguarding Adopted Children from Sexual Violence Act' and expands the crime of incest to include those whose familial relationships are created by adoption.

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

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

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

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

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

**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: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Juvenile Justice Committee. The bill will be heard in committee this TUESDAY.*

**SB 387**

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

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

**SB 401**

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

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

**SB 454**

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

*STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Juvenile Justice Committee. The bill will be heard in committee this TUESDAY.*

**SB 483**

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

*STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Juvenile Justice 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: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee. The bill will be heard in subcommittee TODAY (Monday).*

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

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

**SB 520** (Cowsert-46th) Changes and clarifies provisions relating to income withholding orders, aligning state law terminology with that of federal law by replacing the term "income deduction order" with "income withholding order".

*STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Juvenile Justice Committee. The bill will be heard in committee this TUESDAY.*

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

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



## Health & Behavioral Health

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities 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. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules Committee.*

### HB 557

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

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

### HB 576

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

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

### HB 663

(Hatchett-155th) States that minors admitted to hospitals or long-term care facilities have the right to have a designated essential caregiver present at all times. This caregiver can be a parent, guardian, or another individual designated by the patient or resident, ensuring support for the patient's personal needs and overall well-being. Similarly, adults admitted to these facilities also have the right to a designated essential caregiver. These caregivers are required to comply with all facility policies, rules of conduct, and safety protocols, including wearing personal protective equipment provided by the facility. However, the article specifies that designated essential caregivers may not have access to certain restricted areas within the facility, such as operating rooms or isolation units, and their presence may be limited to specific areas where the patient or resident is receiving care. Facilities have the authority to suspend or terminate the access of designated essential caregivers under various circumstances, including noncompliance with facility policies, failure to comply with safety protocols, or presenting a health or safety risk to others. Additionally, hospitals and long-term care facilities have the discretion to establish visitation policies that limit or restrict visitor access under certain conditions, such as when visitors may interfere with patient care or pose a safety risk. The article emphasizes that the rights specified within it cannot be terminated, suspended, or waived by the facility, and patients cannot be required to waive these rights. Furthermore, facilities are required to post informational materials developed by the Department of Public Health regarding these rights on their websites.

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

### HB 793

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

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

### HB 872

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

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

### HB 874

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[HB 1170](#) (Hawkins-27th) Requires that government buildings, courthouses, and schools with automated external defibrillators provide opioid antagonists to assist in the event of an opioid overdose.

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Health and Human Services Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (Monday).*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[HB 1339](#) (Parrish-158th) Modifies and updates statutes relating to the state's certificate of need (CON) processes. The Department of Community Health (DCH) is required to review and update the state health plan every five years. The time period to submit a letter of intent is reduced from 30 to 25 days before application submission. The 120-day period for DCH to review the application begins upon receipt of the application and within 30 days of receipt, an applicant will be provided an opportunity to meet and review with DCH. Opposition is required to be submitted within 30 days of the receipt of the application. Additionally, expenditure thresholds for the construction, remodeling, and installation of capital projects are removed. HB 1339 expands several provisions relating to CON exemptions. The allowable period for a closed hospital to be repurposed without a CON is extended from 12 to 24 months. The expansion of hospital bed capacity is increased to 10 beds or 20 percent within a three-year period when the occupancy rate exceeds 60 percent for the previous 12 months is exempt. The maximum distance for certain healthcare facilities to relocate without a CON is extended from a three-mile radius to a five mile radius of the original location. Psychiatric or substance abuse inpatient programs or beds for Medicaid and uninsured patients are now exempt when an agreement is reached with a nearby hospital. New or expanded rural hospital-based obstetric services are exempt. Acute care facilities in rural counties are exempt under certain circumstances. Transfers of existing beds and services are exempt when they occur within the same hospital system and are within a 10-mile radius of the original campus, provided the exemption has not been used in the prior 24 months. Noncompliance is addressed in Section 6 of HB 1339. Failure to meet one or more requirements for exemption will result in a monetary penalty. Repeated failure to pay fines or produce data leads to the revocation of exemption. Penalties associated with delayed or unsubmitted reports are increased from \$500 to \$2,000 per day up to 30 days and from \$1,000 to \$5,000 per day for every day after 30 days. DCH and the General Assembly's Office of Legislative Counsel will review and make recommendations to update and rewrite Title 31, Chapter 6 and other such provisions relating to CON in consultation with relevant stakeholders. Recommendations will be made to the General Assembly by December 1, 2024. The DCH commissioner will approve proportional donations to an individual rural hospital if the contribution exceeds the yearly maximum contribution amount. The maximum limit on the rural hospital tax credit is increased from \$75 million to \$100 million per taxable year and the sunset is extended from December 31, 2024 to December 31, 2029. HB 1339 creates the Comprehensive Health Coverage Commission, which will advise the General Assembly, governor, and DCH on matters related to the quality of and access to healthcare by low income and uninsured populations, including reimbursement, funding, quality improvement, and service delivery enhancement opportunities. The commission will consist of nine members including a chairperson appointed by the governor, four non-legislative members appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, and four non-legislative members appointed by the president of the Senate. The commission's initial report will be submitted no later than December 1, 2024 and the commission will be abolished on December 31, 2026.

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

[HB 1344](#) (Dempsey-13th) Revises provisions related to the Behavioral Health Coordinating Council. The commissioners of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Department of Early Care and Learning, Department of Community Health, Department of Public Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Corrections, Department of Community Supervision, Department of Community Affairs,

Technical College System of Georgia, Department of Labor, and the State School Superintendent will be authorized to attend or send a delegate to attend meetings. The Georgia Composite Board of Professional Counselors, Social Workers, and Marriage and Family Therapists can waive experience requirements for licensure applicants from other jurisdictions when their license is in good standing for at least two years.

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

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee.*

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

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

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

*STATUS: House Health Committee*

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

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

**SB 293** (Watson-1st) Clarifies that the Commissioner appoints a District Health Director (DHD) to serve as the CEO of each local health department in a district, and the county board of health vote to approve the selection of a DHD is by majority vote; and allows the DHD to be a non-physician, as long as a physician serves as the chief medical officer to oversee the clinical programs of the health department. DHDs that are physicians, may serve as both the DHD and CMO. The bill also explains that the Commissioner can select an interim DHD if there is vacancy, without county board of health approval until a permanent DHD is appointed and approved by a vote of the county boards of health.

*STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Public Health Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (Monday).*



[SB 307](#) (Kirkpatrick-32nd) Insurers employing prior authorization requirements must establish a program allowing for selective reduction in these requirements based on healthcare providers' performance and adherence to evidence-based medicine, aiming to enhance healthcare quality and affordability while reducing administrative burdens. The insurer has discretion in determining participation criteria for healthcare providers and services in the program but must submit a detailed filing to the department outlining the program's narrative, participation criteria, covered procedures, provider count, and other necessary information. By July 1, 2025, insurers must submit this filing annually in accordance with regulations set by the Commissioner.

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

[SB 373](#) (Walker-20th) Provides for the issuance of expedited licenses by endorsement for marriage and family therapists.

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

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

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

[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: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Education Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (Monday).*

[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 60 days.

*STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Health Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (Monday).*

[SB 460](#) (Dixon-45th) Revises provisions relating to the number of advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants that a physician can authorize and supervise at any one time.

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

[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: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Public Health Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (Monday).*

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

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

## Maternal & Infant Care

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*STATUS: SENATE ADOPTED.*

## K-12 Education

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**SB 50**

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

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

**SB 105**

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

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

**SB 147**

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

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

**SB 202**

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

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

**SB 208**

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

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

**SB 233**

(Dolezal-27th) Creates the 'Georgia 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 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 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: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Education Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (Monday).*

**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. The bill also provides for identification of a universal reading screener for use by public schools.

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

**SR 189**

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

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



## Higher Education

**HB 56**

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

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

**HB 130**

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

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

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

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

**HB 985** (Martin-49th) Abolishes the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation and transfers any obligations, liabilities, or assets to the Georgia Student Finance Authority.

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

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

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

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

*STATUS: House Higher Education Committee*

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

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

[SB 469](#) (Esteves-6th) Relating to the Georgia Higher Education Savings Plan, so as to increase the maximum amount of contributions to a reasonable maximum amount as determined by the board based on current and anticipated education expenses.

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

## Environmental Safety

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

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

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Finance Committee. The bill will be heard in committee TODAY (Monday).*

[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. The bill alters various provisions of the cyberbullying code.

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

**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.*

## 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 107** (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: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate 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. The bill will be heard in committee this TUESDAY.*

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

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

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Finance Committee.*

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

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

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee. The bill will be heard in committee this TUESDAY.*

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

*STATUS: Senate Urban Affairs Committee*



## Miscellaneous

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

***STATUS: SIGNED INTO LAW 1/31/24***

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee. The bill will be heard in committee this TUESDAY.*

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

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

**HB 375** (Leverett-123rd) Relating to conservatorships and guardians, defines "gross settlement" as the present value of all amounts paid or to be paid in settlement of the claim, including: cash; medical expenses; expenses of litigation; attorney's fees; and any amounts allotted to a structured settlement or other similar financial arrangement.

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

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Recommended Do Pass by the Senate Veterans Military and Homeland Security Committee. The bill rests in Senate Rules 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. The bill also requires the employing entity to provide notice of the benefits provided under this Code section to each eligible employee upon hiring and annually thereafter.

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

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

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Finance Committee.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

**HB 1165** (Mainor-56th) Replaces the chairperson of the Governor's Office of Children and Families with the commissioner of the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities on the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

*STATUS: PASSED HOUSE. Assigned to Senate Judiciary Committee.*

**HB 1190** (Collins-71st) Authorizes the division director within the office of the Secretary of State to issue licenses in instances when the requirements for licensure have been met and the professional licensing board fails to act within 60 days of the date of the receipt of an application and the information and documents required to be submitted with such application verifying that all requirements for the issuance of such license have been met.

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

**HR 1083** (Gambill-15th) Creates the House Study Committee on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Workforce for Georgia's Growing Economy.

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

**HR 1169** (Hutchinson-106th) Creates the House Study Committee on the Economic Advantages of Marijuana Legalization.

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

**HR 1256** (Schofield-63rd) Creates the House Study Committee on the Establishment of a Baby Bonds Program.

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

**SB 180** (Setzler-37th) Provides for the preservation of religious freedom relating to state government.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### SB 414

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

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

#### SB 433

(Cowsert-46th) "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: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Judiciary Committee.*

#### SB 437

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

*STATUS: PASSED SENATE. Assigned to House Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee.*

#### SR 476

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

*STATUS: Senate Science and Technology Committee. The bill did not cross over.*

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

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

*STATUS: Senate Hopper*



**Pick an ask! Or choose all 3!**

**Ask #1: Funding for Out-of-School Time**

**The Ask**

Ask members of the Senate Appropriations - Education Subcommittee to:

1. Restore \$2.66 Million in funding to the Out-of-School Services in the Department of Human Services;
2. 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,
3. 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**

1. The Governor and House have proposed a reduction to funding Out-of-School Services within the Department of Human Services. These programs care for our school-age kids after school and during the summer, and will need additional support with the rollback of COVID relief dollars.
2. 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.
3. 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!](#)

### What to Say

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_,

I have three requests related to afterschool and summer enrichment funding. First, please restore the \$2.66 Million in funding to the Out-of-School Services in the Department of Human Services. Second, 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. And finally, 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

[Sen. Billy Hickman](#), Chair, 404-463-1371

[Sen. Gail Davenport](#), 404-463-5260

[Sen. Clint Dixon](#), 404-656-6446

[Sen. Greg Dolezal](#), 404-656-0040

[Sen. Steve Gooch](#), 404-656-9221

[Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick](#), 404-656-3932

[Sen. Nan Orrock](#), 404-463-8054

[Sen. Elena Parent](#), 404-656-5109

[Sen. Valencia Seay](#), 404-656-5095

[Sen. Freddie Powell Sims](#), 404-463-5259

[Sen. Larry Walker, III](#), 404-656-0095

## Ask #2: Safe at Home Tenant Protection (House Bill 404)

### The Ask

Ask members of the Senate Appropriations - Education Subcommittee to:

4. Restore \$2.66 Million in funding to the Out-of-School Services in the Department of Human Services;
5. 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,
6. 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 Does HB 565 Do?

[House Bill 404](#) is an important step to help renters stay, safely, affordably, and stably housed. It helps landlords get paid without having to go to court and brings Georgia closer to what has already long been law in most states. In its current version, HB 404:

- Provides that residential rental properties must be “fit for human habitation,” that means fit for human beings to live in.
- Includes “cooling” as a utility that cannot be shut off after an eviction has been ordered by the court.
- Prohibits landlords from requiring a security deposit that exceeds two months' rent.
- If rent is past due, before they can go to court and file for an eviction the landlord must give the tenant written notice posted on the property door and delivered by other means agreed to in the lease warning the tenant they must pay the rent or leave the property or the eviction may be filed.
- Requires the landlord to wait three business days following the written notice before they can go to court and file for an eviction. The tenant may pay all past due rent, fees, etc. during that period. This is called a “right to cure”.

### Why It Matters

- In FY21, 20% of foster care placements cite inadequate housing as a reason for removal of a child from the home.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has increased housing insecurity in Georgia, which directly impacts children.
  - According to the U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey, as of May 2022, approximately 21% of Georgia households with children surveyed reported little to no confidence in their next rent or mortgage payment on time.
- Black students make up a disproportionate amount of Georgia's homeless student population at nearly 52%, followed by White students at almost 30% and Hispanic students at nearly 13%.
- When kids experience housing instability, unsafe homes or homelessness, they struggle with so much more, such as:
  - Asthma
  - Good nutrition and hunger
  - School attendance, learning and high school completion
  - Fear and trauma

### The Message:

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_,

Please send House Bill 404, the "Safe at Home Act," to the floor of the Senate for a vote. This bill ensures that landlords, in various rental agreements, will maintain habitability for tenants, sets a maximum security deposit amount and sets procedure for breach of contract. About 20% of foster care placements cite inadequate housing as a reason for removal of a child from the home. Children who experience housing instability, unsafe homes or homelessness often also struggle with asthma; school attendance, learning and completion; as well as fear and trauma resulting from the insecurity caused by where they are going to sleep at night. Thank you for your thoughtfulness on behalf of Georgia's children with regards to this bill.

### Who to Contact

<a href="#">Sen. Matt Brass</a> , Chair	404-656-0057	<a href="#">Sen. Brandon Beach</a>	404-463-1378
<a href="#">Sen. Frank Ginn</a> , Vice Chair	404-656-4700	<a href="#">Sen. Gloria Butler</a>	404-656-0075
<a href="#">Sen. Bill Cowsert</a> , Secretary	404-463-1366	<a href="#">Sen. Greg Dolezal</a>	404-656-7127
<a href="#">Sen. John Albers</a>	404-463-8055	<a href="#">Sen. Frank Ginn</a>	404-656-4700
<a href="#">Sen. Jason Anavitarte</a>	404-656-0085	<a href="#">Sen. Steve Gooch</a>	404-656-9221
<a href="#">Sen. Lee Anderson</a>	404-656-5114	<a href="#">Sen. Ed Harbison</a>	404-656-0074

<a href="#">Sen. Chuck Hufstetler</a>	404-656-0034	<a href="#">Sen. Randy Robertson</a>	404-463-3931
<a href="#">Sen. Harold Jones</a>	404-656-0036	<a href="#">Sen. Larry Walker</a>	404-656-0095
<a href="#">Sen. John Kennedy</a>	404-656-6578	<a href="#">Sen. Ben Watson</a>	404-656-7880
<a href="#">Sen. Michael Rhett</a>	404-463-3931		

### [Ask #3: Increase Funding for School-Based Mental Health \(Georgia Apex\)](#)

#### The Ask

Ask members of the Senate Appropriations – Health and Human Development Subcommittee to support, and increase, funding for the Georgia Apex Program 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 Senator \_\_\_\_\_,

Please support, and consider increasing, the \$2 million that is appropriated in the FY25 Budget to expand school-based mental health, namely the Georgia Apex Program. By expanding this to more schools, 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:

[Sen. Ben Watson](#), Chair, 404-656-7880  
[Sen. Billy Hickman](#), 404-463-1371  
[Sen. Emanuel Jones](#), 404-656-0502  
[Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick](#), 404-656-3932

[Sen. Nan Orrock](#), 404-463-8054  
[Sen. Brian Strickland](#), 404-463-6598  
[Sen. Sam Watson](#), 404-656-0065

## 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](#)