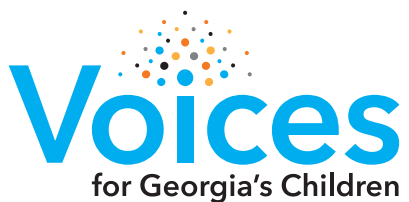
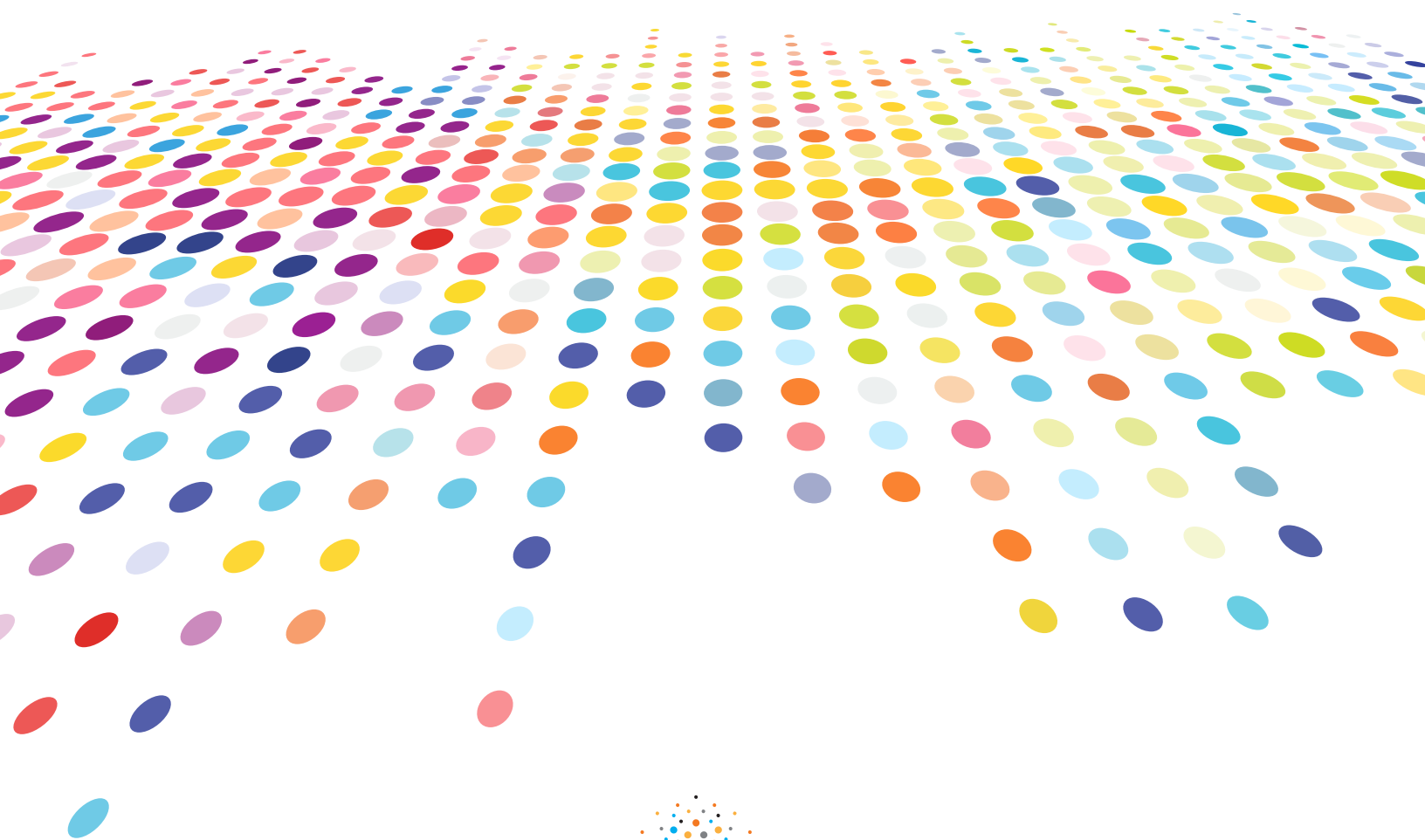


OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION



Last Updated May 14, 2024

2024

VOICES FOR GEORGIA'S
CHILDREN WORKS
TO ADVANCE LAWS,
POLICIES, AND ACTIONS
THAT IMPROVE THE LIVES
OF CHILDREN AND THEIR
FAMILIES.

By the close of the 2024 legislative session, more than 2,000 pieces of legislation and resolutions were addressed by Georgia legislators. In 2024 alone, Voices for Georgia's Children followed 410 pieces of legislation pertaining to children. The vast majority of these bills never made it to the Chamber floors, and only a fraction actually passed. In any given year, only about a fifth of all legislation makes it to the governor's desk, and many of those are bills dealing with local issues such as county taxes, school board membership and the like.

Digesting and distilling so much legislation can be challenging, especially when it comes to understanding the impact of each piece of legislation. In the following pages, we highlight some of the most pressing pieces of legislation and budget items impacting the children and families of Georgia.

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BUDGET BASICS

The Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24) ([House Bill 915](#)) passed and was signed early in the session. The Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budget ([House Bill 916](#)) garnered final approval from both chambers on Sine Die. Legislative passage of the FY24 \$37.9 billion budget and the FY25 \$36.1 billion budget fulfill Georgia's constitutional mandate that the General Assembly maintain balanced budget.

AMENDED FISCAL YEAR 2024 (AFY24)

\$37.9 BILLION

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

FISCAL YEAR 2025 (FY25)

\$36.1 BILLION

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Of interest is the fact, for the last few years, federally-allocated COVID pandemic response dollars have contributed to Georgia's overall spending in various sectors. The vast majority of these supplemental funds are now ending. That means that budget writers had to make certain decisions as to whether or not to replace those soon-to-be missing dollars. We have tried to note in this document spots where this situation was particularly relevant.

Additionally, Georgia currently has the legal limit of 15% of state revenue (\$5.4 billion) in its rainy day fund, as well as more than \$8 billion in reserves from surplus revenues. The state has left these dollars in reserves and therefore they are not considered in the state's final budget spends.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Georgia Pre-K Program

In March 2023, House Speaker Jon Burns established the House Working Group on Early Childhood Education to focus on issues surrounding the access and effectiveness of Georgia's statewide Pre-K program. The working group published a [report](#) detailing its findings and recommendations.

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **More than \$57.5 million** in new lottery funds to **implement recommendations** by the Working Group (Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)). Those recommendations included:
 - **Class size reduction** from 22 to 20 students, phased-in over four years
 - **Increase in start-up grants** for new classrooms
 - Funds for **classroom replenishment grants** every five years
 - Increase in **transportation funding**
 - **Operating increase** for private pre-k providers
 - **Pay parity** between pre-k assistant teachers and K-12 paraprofessionals, and **moving pre-k lead teachers to the State Board of Education salary schedule**

Summer Transition Program

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$8.9 million** to **expand the Summer Transition Program** (DECAL)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$8.97 million** to **expand the Summer Transition Program** (DECAL)

Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS)

The majority of funding for CAPS is through federal dollars, which were buoyed by pandemic response dollars. While the funds below are nowhere nearly enough to fill the void left by the ending of the supplement, the amount nevertheless represents a significant contribution by the state to this program.

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$9.3 million** to **increase CAPS reimbursement rates** for childcare providers (DECAL)

BILLS OF NOTE

Senate Bill 233 (Dolezal-27th) - Provides \$6,500 per student to families for qualified education-related expenses outside the public school system; changes program weights in the Quality Basic Education Formula; **allows capital outlays funds to be used for Georgia's Pre-K programs in public schools**; caps tuition fees for out-of-district student transfers; revises grants to low-performing schools; and amends the tax credit for qualified education donations. [See K-12 Education section for full summary.](#)

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR



K-12 EDUCATION

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Student Enrollment

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$102.5 million** for the QBE midterm adjustment to reflect an increase in 825 students (or 0.05%) over last year, also reflecting more student growth in higher-cost student categories (GaDOE)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$243.5 million** to provide for enrollment growth and training and experience for an additional 825 students and 3,311 teachers (GaDOE)

State Completion Schools

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$6.3 million** for state completion special schools (GaDOE)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$6.3 million** for state completion schools (GaDOE)

Charter Schools

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$27.7 million** in growth for the state charter school supplement reflecting eight additional schools (GaDOE)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$40.2 million** for growth in the State Commission Charter School supplements (GaDOE)

Communities in Schools

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$1.57 million** for Communities in Schools (CIS) to expand the program to 10 additional school districts (By the 2025-2026 school year, CIS will serve 46 districts, 240 schools, and 140,000 students)¹ (GaDOE)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$1 million** for Communities in Schools (GaDOE)

Student Support

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$8.9 million** in growth for the Special Needs Scholarship (GaDOE)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$353.5 million** for pupil transportation (GaDOE)
- **\$1.5 million** for dyslexia screening and universal reading screening (GaDOE)
- **\$6.1 million** for literacy (includes regional literacy coaches at each RESA; \$1,000 supplements to school literacy leads; and training for local coaches, teachers, and ESOL teachers) (GaDOE)
- **\$250,000** for a mentorship program for new teachers to increase retention (GaDOE)

¹ Communities in Schools supports students to improve attendance, behavior, academic performance, retention, and graduation

House Bill 51 (Pirkle-169th) Ensures athletic associations include and recognize all other voluntary nonprofit school activities associations of Georgia high schools as a member, and allows local boards of education to utilize alternative means of transportation other than school buses to transport students to school and school-related activities where appropriate.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Senate Bill 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: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

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

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Senate Bill 351 (Anavitarte-31st) The 'Protecting Georgia's Children on Social Media Act of 2024' introduces a series of measures aimed at enhancing online safety and promoting responsible digital citizenship among minors, including: the inclusion of lessons on responsible digital citizenship and safety

BILLS OF NOTE, CONTINUED

technology usage into the character education program, directing the Department of Education to develop model programs for online safety targeting students in grades 6-12 as well as include cyberbullying prevention, requiring local education authorities to adopt acceptable-use and social media policies, and requiring social media platforms and commercial entities to require age verification for access to social media or harmful materials.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Senate Bill 440 (Brass-28th) Revises O.C.G.A. 20-2-149.2, known as the Accelerated Career Diploma program, to simplify the dual enrollment program and allow for academic flexibility to better align with pathway programs. This diploma path is only available for an associate degree for applied science within the Technical College System of Georgia. The Dual Enrollment ACE (Accelerated Career Education) grant program creates a grant for students participating in the Accelerated Career Diploma program. These students will not be subject to the 30-hour dual enrollment cap and will allow dual enrollment funding to distinguish between academic and technical students. The sunset for this program is June 30, 2027.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Senate Bill 464 (Dixon-45th) Revises the Georgia Early Literacy Act to create an executive committee of voting members of the Council on Literacy made up of five members appointed by the governor, president of the Senate, speaker of the House, a representative from the State Board of Education, and the chairperson of the council. Section 2 provides for the identification of universal reading screeners by the Department of Education and Georgia Council on Literacy, one of which will be free to local school systems, for use by public schools and local school systems by May 15, 2025. Section 3 establishes the 'School Supplies for Educators Act' to provide financial/technical assistance to educators to purchase school supplies online subject to appropriations.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR



HIGHER EDUCATION

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Facility Expansion

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$178 million** for a new dental school at Georgia Southern University in Savannah (University System of Georgia Board of Regents (USG))
- **\$50 million** for design and construction of the Medical School at the University of Georgia (USG)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$4.6 million** for the Medical College of Georgia expansion at Georgia Southern University's Armstrong campus (USG)

Student Support

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$7.4 million** to the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) to provide increased credit hour earnings for the high-demand program areas of aviation, commercial truck driving, and nursing (TCSG)

Dual Enrollment

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$12.3 million** to fund the growing participation in the Dual Enrollment program in the current year (Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC))

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$15 million** for the Dual Enrollment program (which served more than 52,000 Georgia students in FY 2023) and is continuing to grow (GSFC)

BILLS OF NOTE

House Bill 228 (Dempsey-12th) Expands tuition equalization grant eligibility to include certain higher education institutions which offer baccalaureate programs in nursing.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

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

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

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

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR



AFTERSCHOOL AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Out-of-School Services

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$750,000** for community **youth tutoring and wellness** (Department of Human Services (DHS))

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$2.66 million reduced** from DHS' Out-of-School Services division (DHS)

This reduction eliminated one time funding of \$1 million from FY24 earmark and eliminated an additional \$1.66 million.

BILLS OF NOTE

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

STATUS: SENATE ADOPTED

Because this resolution creates a Senate Study Committee, it does not need approval from the House or the Governor.



NUTRITION

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Summer Food Programs

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$100,000** for startup grants of up to \$10,000 per provider to **establish additional Summer Food Service Program meal sites** in areas with high rates of child food insecurity. (DECAL)

DECAL's program, Happy Helpings, served 100 counties last year, and when combined with DOE's summer nutrition programs, 158 out of 159 counties were served.

School Nutrition

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$6.3 Million** in FY25 for the **cost of breakfast and lunch for reduced-paying students**. (GaDOE)

During the pandemic, the federal government provided reimbursement for all students, regardless of free and reduced status. This allocation seeks to fill a funding void left by the rollback of pandemic response funds.

- **\$2 Million** in school nutrition formula funds in FY25 is provided to local school systems to **keep the price of meals affordable for paying students and families**. (GaDOE)
- **\$1.4 Million** in FY25 for a **4.1% pay raise** for school nutrition workers. (GaDOE)



HEALTH

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Medicaid Unwinding

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$1.5 Million** transferred to **increase funds for Medicaid Redetermination notice mailings** (DHS)
- **\$2.06 Million** for **labor and wage data verification services** (DHS)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$2.06 Million** for **labor and wage data verification services** (DHS)

Health Insurance

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$134 Million** in AFY24 for the **state reinsurance program**. (Office of the Commissioner of Insurance (OCI))
- **\$1.73 Million** to **integrate Pathways and Georgia Access (GA-based Exchange for healthcare insurance) into the Georgia Gateway integrated eligibility system** (DHS)
- **\$16.39 Million** for **implementation of Georgia Access** (DHS)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$20 million** for the **state reinsurance program**. (OCI)

Expanding Access to Care

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$250,000** for one-time funding for **one federally qualified health center start-up grant** in Cobb County (Department of Community Health)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$750,000** 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 (DCH)

Training and Workforce

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$2.01 million** for **105 new residency slots in primary care** (DCH)
- **\$56,757** for a rural public health **preventative medicine rotation** (DCH)
- **\$50,000** for one-time start-up funds for the development of a **Pediatric Rural Training Track** (DCH)
- **\$630,057** in FY25 for **23 county customer service staff** to provide staff in every DHS customer service center (DHS)
- **\$1.53 million** for 20 positions to monitor, evaluate, and improve **Care Management Organization oversight** (DCH)

Legislative Allocations

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$200,000** to establish the **Comprehensive Health Coverage Commission** pursuant to HB 1339 (DCH)

House Bill 663 (Hatchett-155th) Allows for a designated essential caregiver to be present with a patient or resident of a hospital or long-term care facility while they are receiving care. This designated caregiver must adhere to the policies of the hospital or long-term care facility, and their access may be suspended or terminated under outlined circumstances.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

House Bill 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: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

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

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

House Bill 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 DCHS. Opposition is required to be submitted within 30 days of 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 expansion of hospital bed capacity up to 10 beds or 20 percent within a three-year period when occupancy exceeds 60 percent for the previous 12 months is exempt. The maximum distance for certain healthcare facilities to relocate with 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 perinatal services are exempt when an agreement is reached with a nearby hospital, including new or expanded birthing centers. New acute care facilities in rural counties are exempt under certain circumstances. New short-stay general hospitals are exempt if the new facility is replacing a closed facility within a 48-month timeframe and within five miles of the main campus of a medical school. Transfers of existing beds and services are exempt when they occur within the same hospital system and are within a 15-mile radius of the original campus. DCHS 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. 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. 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.

BILLS OF NOTE, CONTINUED

The commission will consist of nine members, including: a chairperson appointed by the governor; three non-legislative members appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives; three non-legislative members appointed by the president of the Senate; one non-legislative member appointed by the House minority leader; and one non-legislative member appointed by the Senate minority leader. The commission's initial report will be submitted no later than December 1, 2024 and the commission will be abolished on December 3, 2026.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Senate Bill 395 (Dixon-45th) Wesley's Law'- Makes any opioid antagonist exempt from classification as a dangerous drug when used for overdose prevention. Section 2 creates O.C.G.A. 20-2-776.5. known as 'Wesley's Law', allows for visitors and school employees to possess and administer an opioid antagonist if the person believes someone is suffering from a drug overdose on school property or at a school-sponsored activity. No cause of action can be brought whether a school personnel administers or chooses not to administer an opioid antagonist when this decision is brought in good faith. Section 3 clarifies that prescription drugs may not be dispensed by a vending machine in O.C.G.A. 26-4-89. Section 4 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. Section 5 requires that government buildings, courthouses, and schools with automated external defibrillators provide opioid antagonists to assist in the event of an opioid overdose

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR



MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Infant Health and Development

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$97,000** to support development of **donor breast milk bank** (DPH)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$978,639** for **newborn screenings** to include two additional disorders that have been approved by the Georgia Newborn Screening Advisory Committee (Department of Public Health (DPH))
- **\$500,000** for **infant mortality research** as part of Morehouse School of Medicine's Center for Maternal Health Equity (DCH)

Workforce and Training

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$150,000** for year two of the **maternal fetal medicine fellowship** (DCH)
- **\$12.6 million** in the Medicaid budget for **primary care physicians and obstetricians** (DCH)
- **\$750,000** for an **OB/GYN service expansion** as part of a new rural training track residency program (DCH)

Evidence-Based Home Visiting

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$1 million** to expand the pilot program to provide **home visiting in at-risk and underserved rural communities** by increasing the funding by \$752,000 (DPH)

This move builds on the success of the home visiting pilots established last year. The increased funding will allow the program to expand to an additional 10 counties.

BILLS OF NOTE

House Bill 1010 (Jones-47th) Increases the number of hours of annual paid parental leave for state employees and employees of local education agencies from 120 to 240 hours. Paid parental leave can be used for the birth of a child or the foster and adoption placement of a child.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

House Bill 1046 (Clark-100th) Allows advance practice registered nurses and physician assistants to complete and sign death certificates under the authority of a physician. Creates the Georgia Commission on Maternal and Infant Health to make policy recommendations regarding perinatal care programs and develop quality metrics. A report is due on July 1, 2026 and the commission will be repealed.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Capital Projects

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$15.5 Million** to fund the construction of the **Gateway Child and Adolescent Crisis Stabilization Unit in Savannah** (DBHDD)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$125,000** to fund the construction of the **Gateway Child and Adolescent Crisis Stabilization Unit in Savannah** (DBHDD)
- **\$1.5 Million** for the **David Ralston Center for Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities** at the University of Georgia. This center will address workforce needs and gaps in regard to the professionals who serve Georgians with intellectual and developmental disabilities. (USG)

Occupational Licensure

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$145,600** for **temporary labor** to address a backlog of licensure applications (Secretary of State (SOS))

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$1.5 million** for a **comprehensive overhaul of the Professional Licensing Boards Division** to include additional employees, temporary staff, equipment, etc. to address the backlog of licensure applications (SOS)

Service Expansion

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$750,000** to implement **transportation alternatives** for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis (DBHDD)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$608,000** to **support children and adults with autism** through enrichment and employment opportunities, psychiatric services, and screening (DBHDD)
- **\$1 Million** to **expand the Georgia Apex program to additional schools.** (DBHDD)

Provider Reimbursements

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$15.9 Million** for **provider rate increases** within the Georgia Pediatric Program (GAPP)
- **\$5.6 Million** for **Medicaid reimbursements** for speech therapists, audiologists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists (DCH)
- **\$79.9 Million** to fund the **NOW/COMP provider rate increases** (DBHDD)

House Bill 984 (Lumsden-12th) Allows certified law enforcement officers employed by the office of safety fire commissioner to use a department vehicle while off-duty under certain circumstances. The bill also repeals O.C.G.A. 33-10-13 to comply with National Association of Insurance Commissioners accreditation standards. The bill also allows for developmentally or physically disabled individuals to remain on their parent or guardian's insurance beyond the cutoff age. Lastly, it changes the default communication from insurers to consumers from paper to electronic format under certain circumstances.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

House Bill 1409 (Levrett-123rd) Pertaining to the legal liability of inpatient mental health providers in the delivery of care to individuals under the age of 21 who are in the custody of the Department of Human Services. Mental health care providers will not be held liable unless gross negligence occurs. In such cases, the jury will be instructed to consider the patient's medical history, provider-patient relationships, and circumstances surrounding delivery and provision of services. Note that under this legislation, "A foster care parent trained by a contracted child placement agency to coordinate mental health care services" is considered a mental health care professional and thus protected under the provisions of this legislation.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Senate Bill 195 (Walker-20th) Enters Georgia into the 'Social Work Licensure Compact'. The purposes of the compact include increasing public access to social workers, reducing the multiple licenses required between different member states, and promoting mobility between member states to lessen the current workforce shortage for social workers.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Senate Bill 373 (Walker-20th) Streamlines provisions for licensure as a professional counselors, social workers, and marriage and family therapists, but increases the number of hours an associate professional counselor is required to have 90 quarter hours in relevant education rather than 80 hours in order to be licensed. The bill also provides for expedited licenses by endorsement within 30 days from the date of application for those individuals who have the same type of license in another state and meet other requirements, such as being in good standing.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

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

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

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

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR



CHILD WELFARE

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Technology

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$650,000** to procure and manage information technology and **dependency case data migration** for the Juvenile Courts per SB 401 (see below). (Juvenile Courts)
- **\$3.2 Million** for **technology upgrades and improvements** to the SHINES child welfare case management system. (Office of the Child Advocate (OCA))
- **\$360,000** for **technology upgrades and improvements** to the TRAILS electronic records management system to enhance efficiency in child care residential licensing. (OCA)

Representation and Services

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$99,780** to **improve the legal representation** of foster children (Office of Child Advocate (OCA))
- **\$1.5 Million** to **match federal funds for wraparound services** for those encountering the child welfare system (OCA)
- **\$82,102** to **establish an application and inspection process** in DHS for Qualified Residential Treatment Programs. (see SB 377 in item #7 below) (OCA)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$1 Million** to the **court appointed special advocates (CASA)** to expand statewide (DHS)
- **\$1 Million** to the state's Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) for **increased forensic and mental health services** (DHS)

Workforce Recruitment and Retention

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$7 Million** to provide a **\$3,000 salary enhancement** for child support, child welfare, and elder abuse caseworkers (DHS)
- **\$8.4 Million** for a **3% provider increase** for child caring institutions, child placing agencies, foster parents, and relative caregivers (DHS)
- **\$218,000** for the **Juvenile Court Judges' salary supplement** (Juvenile Court)

*With the note regarding SB 401 (see below) "Beginning in FY 2023, a \$6,000 supplement has been paid to juvenile court judges who certified no backlog of cases existed in their courts. There is ambiguity surrounding whether the purpose of this allocation has been followed. A new data system should answer questions concerning case backlogs. Therefore, this \$6,000 supplement shall cease on February 1, 2025 for any juvenile court judge who has not adopted a uniform case management system that at a minimum provides the period of time that a child has been in Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) custody pending permanency."

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

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

House Bill 993 (Powell-33rd) Creates a criminal penalty for those who groom a minor through a pattern of activity or communication, and either through a third party or through the use of 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. This applies to conduct completed within or outside of the state or conduct aimed at a minor outside of this state if the actions occurred within this state.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Senate Bill 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: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Senate Bill 376 (Tillery-19th) Amends various Code sections related to dependency proceedings to change various deadlines regarding case plans in dependency proceedings.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Senate Bill 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 prevents 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: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

BILLS OF NOTE, CONTINUED

Senate Bill 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. 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.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Senate Bill 483 (Hatchett-50th) Enters Georgia into the updated version of the ‘Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children Act’, which provides a streamlined procedure for coordinating the placement of juveniles in different states, whether from public or private child placing agencies.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Note: **House Bill 1090** (Newton-127th) DID NOT PASS. This bill would have expanded qualified expenditures for the foster care tax credit to include wraparound services for aging foster children and justice involved youth, among other provisions.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Georgia Commission on Family Violence

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$40,250** to update the **Georgia State Plan for Ending Family Violence** (GA Commission on Family Violence)

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Coordinators

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$315,000** for one **SANE coordinator** for every sexual assault center starting April 1, 2024 (Council of Accountability Court Judges (CACJ))

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$4.38 Million** for **SANE coordinators** and to improve access to SANE resources for sexual assault centers (CACJ)

Staffing

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$12.7 Million** for **domestic violence shelters** for administrative personnel and facility costs related to compliance with state standards; funds will not be allotted until the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council develops not-to-exceed pay scales and not-to-exceed expenditures for facilities (CACJ)
- **\$2.07 Million** for **sexual assault centers** for administrative personnel and facility costs related to compliance with state standards; funds will not be allotted until the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council develops not-to-exceed pay scales and not-to-exceed expenditures for facilities (CACJ)

Facility Expansions

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$895,785** for six **sexual assault centers** (\$325,740) and 21 **satellite sexual assault centers** (\$570,045) (CACJ)



HOUSING

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

State Housing Trust Fund

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$2.13 million** to **leverage federal grant funds** for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (Total State and Federal Funds = \$2,924,806). The Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program is an initiative designed to reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness. (DCA)
- **\$1 million** to create the **Accountable Housing Initiative** (under the State Housing Trust Fund). This includes funds for organizations who help homeless individuals obtain stable, immediate housing in the short-term and achieve affordable housing in the long-term. (DCA)
- **\$3.7 million** to **improve homelessness services** through new federal grant opportunities (DCA)

BILLS OF NOTE

House Bill 404 (Carpenter-4th) Requires that rental properties are fit for human habitation. Utilities cannot be shut off prior to an eviction action. A security deposit cannot exceed two months' rent. A tenant, when they fail to pay charges owed to the landlord, is afforded a three business-day written notice period prior to an eviction proceeding being filed. An eviction notice must be posted conspicuously on the property door in a sealed envelope and delivered via any methods agreed to in the rental agreement.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

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

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR



PUBLIC WORKFORCE

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Recruitment and Retention

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- One-time **\$1,000 salary supplement** for full-time, benefit-eligible employees

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **4% cost-of-living-adjustment** for state employees not to exceed \$3,000
- Additional **\$3,000 targeted salary enhancement** for selected POST certified law enforcement officers (DJJ)
- **4.1% pay raise** for bus drivers, school nurses, and Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) staff, as well as a \$1,000 salary supplement for school custodians (GaDOE)
- \$373.6 million to increase the **state base salary schedule for certified teachers** and employees by \$2,500 (GaDOE)



JUVENILE JUSTICE AND SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

School Security

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 (AFY24)

- **\$1.25 million** transferred for **School Resource Officer and De-escalation Training** (CJCC)

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$1.25 million** transferred for **School Resource Officer and De-escalation Training** (CJCC)
- **\$109 million** for **school safety and security grants** (\$45,000 grant per school that can be used for infrastructure expenses or operating expenses, including salaries for school resource officers) (GaDOE)

Recruitment and Retention

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **\$1.19 million** to provide a **new salary benchmark** for juvenile correctional officers at \$40,040 to create parity with correctional officers (DJJ)

Capital Projects

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

- **More than \$61 million** to **repair and renovate existing juvenile detention facilities** and to plan and build such facilities in Bibb, Baldwin, and Gwinnett counties

BILLS OF NOTE

House Bill 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.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

House Bill 926 (Reeves-99th) "Second Chance Workforce Act" allows a traffic court judge to reinstate an accused person's license when it was suspended because of a failure to appear, and they subsequently have scheduled a new date to appear before the court; have appeared in court for a hearing, arraignment, or waiver of arraignment and entry of plea; or when the charge has been fully adjudicated. The bill strikes an exception to the Class C drivers' license that provided for a combination of vehicles with a gross weight rating of 26,000 pounds or less that is controlled and operated by a farmer or used for agricultural purposes. The bill also adds battery against a healthcare worker or emergency health worker to the list of crimes that constitute a "serious delinquent act" by a minor and must be considered when determining whether to detain the child. Further, reports of incidents of family violence must include the existence of any protective orders, and the number of and nature of prior complaints of family violence.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

BILLS OF NOTE, CONTINUED

House Bill 993 (Powell-33rd) Creates a criminal penalty for those who groom a minor through a pattern of activity or communication, and either through a third party or through the use of 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. This applies to conduct completed within or outside of the state or conduct aimed at a minor outside of this state if the actions occurred within this state.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR


Senate Bill 169 (Payne-54th) Revises the hearing dates for suspensions. A hearing should be held no later than 10 school days from the beginning of the suspension unless there is an agreement between the parents and school system, in which case the hearing must be no later than 15 days after the beginning of the suspension. A hearing can be held later than 15 days upon written request to the school system by a parent or guardian.

STATUS: SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

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

STATUS: SENATE ADOPTED

Because this resolution creates a Senate study committee, it does not need approval from the House or the Governor.



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for Georgia's Children

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