



# CONNECTED to Public Policy



Integrating State Policy with Local Solutions

January 18, 2017

## Deal Highlights Positive Economic Outcomes; Releases Budget Recommendations Wednesday

Gov. Nathan Deal delivered his annual [State-of-the-State address](#) on Jan. 11, introducing his priorities for the year. Highlights from his speech include:

- Confirming a Sept. 2016 announcement of a 20-percent pay raise for state law enforcement, as well as expanded training on deescalating violence, community policing, and handling situations involving individuals with mental impairment;
- Announcing a 19-percent (on average) pay raise for Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) caseworkers;
- Expanding behavioral and mental health coverage to Medicaid and PeachCare members between birth and age four; and
- Announcing a 2-percent salary increase for teachers.

### New Floor Leaders

Deal also announced his 2017 House and Senate floor leaders last week. Rep. Chuck Efstrotation (Dist. 104) and Rep. Trey Rhodes (Dist. 120) will join Rep. Terry Rogers (Dist. 10) as House floor leaders, while Sen. P.K. Martin (Dist. 9) and Sen. Larry Walker III (Dist. 20) will join Sen. Butch Miller (Dist. 49) to carry the governor's bills in the Senate.

### Budget

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Deal's recommendation for Georgia Family Connection's appropriation remains unchanged from last year's final budget. Highlights from Deal's [Amended FY17](#) and [FY18](#) budget suggestions include:

**Board of Regents—Amended FY17**

\$2.34 million to establish the Georgia Center for Early Language and Literacy at Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville

**Board of Regents—FY18**

An additional \$2.7 million to establish the Georgia Center for Early Language and Literacy at Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville

**Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities—FY18**

\$6 million for one Behavioral Health Crisis Center

**Department of Community Health (DCH)—Amended FY17**

Increase funds to raise the five-year benefit limit for children's hearing aids from \$3,000 to \$6,000 in the State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP)

**DCH—FY18**

- Increase funds to raise the five-year benefit limit for children's hearing aids from \$3,000 to \$6,000 in the SHBP
- Evaluate options to ensure mental health coverage parity for Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program beneficiaries with that of the commercial market
- \$17.9 million in state funds to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for select primary care and OB/GYN codes to 100 percent of 2014 Medicare levels (total funds: \$56.68 million)
- \$20.76 million in state funds to cover behavioral health services for children under 21 who are diagnosed as autistic (total funds: \$65.5 million)
- \$2.5 million in state funds for behavioral health services to children ages 0 – 4 (total funds: \$8 million)

**Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)—FY18**

- Transfer 135 Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) positions from the Department of Human Services to DECAL
- \$5,546,095 for the CAPS program for tiered reimbursement for Quality Rated child-care providers

**Department of Education (DOE)—FY18**

- \$160,105,154 in the Quality Basic Education (QBE) program for a 2-percent increase to the state base salary schedule for certified personnel, school bus drivers, and school nurses, effective on Sept. 1, 2017
- \$178,289 for additional school nurses

**Department of Human Services (DHS)—Amended FY17**

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- \$13.46 million for the Integrated Eligibility System information technology project
- \$28.6 million for growth in Out-of-Home Care utilization

#### **DHS—FY18**

- \$25.87 million to increase child welfare caseworker salaries by 19 percent (total funds: \$31 million)
- \$2.86 million for 80 additional foster care support services employees (total funds: \$3.97 million)
- \$2.5 million for 27 additional employees to fully implement the supervisor-mentor program in child welfare services
- An additional \$10.99 million for the Integrated Eligibility System information technology project
- \$2.5 million for 25 additional human resources employees to meet recruitment demands
- An additional \$30.89 million for growth in Out-of-Home Care utilization (total funds: \$35.3 million)
- \$3.9 million to increase DFCS foster care per diem rates by 57 percent (total funds: \$12.3 million)

#### **Department of Juvenile Justice—FY18**

\$1.9 million for the new Wilkes Regional Youth Detention Center to reflect a November opening date

#### **Department of Public Health (DPH)—Amended FY17**

\$500,000 for telehealth equipment and maintenance

#### **DPH—FY18**

\$2.23 million for telehealth infrastructure in DPH formula grants to counties

#### **Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC)—Amended FY17**

- \$16.79 million to meet the projected needs of Move on When Ready—a program that allows students to pursue post-secondary study at approved public and private institutions while receiving dual high school and college credit
- \$1.8 million for additional REACH scholarships in participating school systems, and to expand into 30 new school systems (REACH provides needs-based scholarships to selected students participating in the program, which encourages and supports academically promising middle- and high-school students.)

#### **GSFC—FY18**

- An additional \$29.4 million to meet the projected needs of Move on When Ready
- Use existing funds to continue a REACH pilot program for youth in foster care
- \$38.4 million to increase the award amount for HOPE Scholarships by 3 percent to meet the projected need
- \$10.86 million to meet the projected need for Zell Miller Scholarship students

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## **Juvenile Courts—FY18**

\$281,024 for one director and two coordinator positions for the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative

## **Schedule**

Legislators passed an [adjournment resolution](#) setting the calendar for the first 12 legislative days. They were in session for four days last week, and then adjourned until Monday, Feb. 23.

The House and Senate Appropriations Committees held [joint hearings](#) yesterday and continue today, Jan. 18. Legislators will break on Thursday, Jan. 19, and Friday, Jan. 20, for the presidential inauguration.