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Feb. 14, 2017

## House Bill Provides Alternative to Opportunity School District; Federal Relief Funds Approved

[HB 338](#) (Rep. Kevin Tanner, 9th) was introduced last week as a comprehensive intervention strategy for chronically underperforming schools. Referred to as “Plan B,” the bill offers an alternative to the Opportunity School District (OSD) plan that Georgia voters did not approve in November.

Some details of HB 338 include:

- The State Board of Education (SBOE) will appoint a Chief Turnaround Officer (CTO) who will report directly to the board.
- The CTO will recommend personnel to serve as turnaround coaches for SBOE approval. Coaches will provide ongoing assistance and input to schools identified as low-performing that have the greatest need.
- The schools selected to receive coaching will be based on the number of years they have received an unacceptable rating and other factors identified by the CTO.
- Coaches will be assigned to one or more schools and will help create local collaborations to address conditions impacting student achievement.

- Local boards may sign an intervention contract for state assistance; otherwise, the SBOE will have up to 60 days to implement one or more interventions in current law.
- A turnaround coach, Regional Educational Service Agency personnel, and possibly a third-party provider will conduct a comprehensive evaluation, make recommendations, and help develop an intensive school improvement plan within 90 days of entering into a contract.

A House Education Committee hearing on HB 338 is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 16, but details have not been announced.

### **Tornado Relief**

Gov. Nathan Deal announced that 11 South Georgia counties impacted by recent tornadoes were approved to receive [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) grants](#) to assist with relief efforts. The counties are: Baker, Brooks, Calhoun, Clay, Cook, Crisp, Dougherty, Thomas, Turner, Wilcox, and Worth.

## **Budget**

The House finished most of its hearings on the FY18 budget last week, and House appropriations subcommittees are working on recommendations for possible changes or additions.

The Senate passed its [version of the Amended FY17 budget](#) on Feb. 9 with a few alterations from the House's version. The two chambers are now working to reconcile the differences to finalize that budget.

Differences between the House and Senate versions of the Amended FY17 budget include:

### **Department of Education (GaDOE)**

- In Technology/Career Education, the House recommended \$3.5 million for career, technical, and agricultural equipment grants to local school systems, while the Senate recommended \$5.58 million.
- In Testing, the Senate added \$2.5 million to contract with a nationally recognized vendor that has vetted assessments for research-based reading assessment tools to complement any locally approved reading program. The vendor will also provide assessments that place students into instruction based on skill level and provide real-time data analysis on reading progress for students, teachers, school leaders, and parents.

### **Department of Human Services (DHS)**

- The governor recommended—and the House's version of the budget included—an addition of \$28.6 million in state funds (\$32.7 million total) to grow the use of out-of-home care. The Senate's version reduced funding to \$27 million in state funds (\$30.9 million total).
- The House added \$974,712 for the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) to increase DFCS foster parent per diem rates by 57 percent, effective April 1, 2017. The Senate increased the funding to \$2.57 million to fully fund an increase in all foster parent per diem rates by 57 percent, effective April 1, 2017.

## Department of Public Health (DPH)

- The governor's budget recommended \$651,897 to replace federal funds to continue providing women's health services (family planning). The House and Senate agreed on the funding amount, but the Senate added language that requires DPH to report to the Georgia General Assembly on the initiative's progress with specific outcome measures provided for FY17 by Jan. 1, 2018.
- The Senate included a reduction of \$1 million in Adolescent Health and Youth Development.
- The Senate included a reduction of \$628,263 in funds for the Office of Children and Families.

## University System of Georgia

The governor's budget recommended \$3.5 million for the Georgia Public Television Commission to develop a formative assessment for the K-3 grade continuum of math and reading skills in partnership with GaDOE and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement to support flexible grouping and competency-based education pilots. The House reduced the funds to \$2.5 million, while the Senate cut the proposed funding entirely, adding language that recognized funding for assessments in GaDOE (see second GaDOE bullet).

## Schedule

Legislators were in session Tuesday through Friday last week, completing 16 of the 40 legislative days. They are scheduled to be in session Tuesday through Friday of this week.

The House and Senate adopted an [adjournment resolution](#) that sets the calendar for the remainder of the 2017 session, with the final legislative day scheduled for Thursday, March 30.

## Legislation

The following bills related to children and families have been introduced this session.



**[HB 198](#)** (Rep. Katie Dempsey, 13th) requires that information about influenza and the influenza vaccine will be included in resources regarding immunizations, infectious disease, or other school health issues that are provided to parents of students in grades 6-12 by local boards of education.

**Status:** The House Education Committee passed the bill on Feb. 9.

**[HB 241](#)** (Rep. Lee Hawkins, 27th) adds Krabbe disease to the list of metabolic and genetic conditions for which newborns may be screened. Krabbe disease is a rare, often fatal, degenerative disorder that affects

the myelin sheath of the nervous system. Under the bill, screening for Krabbe disease will be conducted separately at the option of—and paid for—by the parents.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Health and Human Services Committee.

**HB 246** (Rep. Wes Cantrell, 22nd) repeals the sunset provision on an annual fitness assessment program approved and funded by the SBOE for students in grades 1-12.

**Status:** The House Education Committee passed the bill on Feb. 9.

**HB 273** (Rep. Demetrius Douglas, 78th) requires each local board of education to schedule a daily recess for students in grades K-5, beginning in the 2017-18 school year.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee.

**HB 274** (Rep. Sandra Scott, 76th) makes it a misdemeanor to smoke inside a motor vehicle when a person under the age of 14 is present.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee.

**SB 16** (Sen. Ben Watson, 1st) adds autism spectrum disorder as a diagnosis eligible for treatment with cannabis oil.

**Status:** The Senate Health and Human Services Committee passed a substitute version of the bill on Feb. 7 that states cannabis oil may be used to treat autism spectrum disorder in patients 18 years or older, or to treat severe autism (as determined by a treating physician) for patients less than 18. The substitute version also lowers the maximum percent of THC permitted for medical treatment from 5 to 3 percent.

**SB 118** (Sen. Renee Unterman, 45th) increases the age for health insurance coverage for individuals with autism spectrum disorder from 6 to 21.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee and scheduled for discussion on Feb. 14.



## CHILDREN SUCCEEDING IN SCHOOL

**HB 77** (Rep. Dar'shun Kendrick, 93rd) instructs the GaDOE, in consultation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) and mental health experts, to provide local school systems with a list of training materials for mental health awareness, behavioral disabilities, and learning disabilities. The materials must be provided no later than July 1, 2018.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee and is scheduled for a subcommittee hearing on Saturday, Feb. 18. The subcommittee is not expected to take a vote at the hearing.

**HB 114** (Rep. Robert Dickey, 140th) prohibits local school systems from excluding students in dual credit courses (the Move-on-When-Ready program) from valedictorian or salutatorian determinations.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee and is scheduled for a subcommittee hearing on Feb. 14.

**HB 237** (Rep. Brooks Coleman, 97th) authorizes the Public Education Innovation Fund Foundation to receive private donations used for public school grants for the implementation of academic and organizational innovations to improve student achievement.

**Status:** This bill is assigned to the House Ways and Means Committee.

**[HB 297](#)** (Rep. Debra Bazemore, 63rd) revises school safety plan requirements for early care and education programs by expanding the list of emergency situations that must be included. The bill also details new steps programs must take in developing and implementing their plans.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee.

**[HB 338](#)** (Rep. Kevin Tanner, 9th) provides a comprehensive intervention strategy for chronically underperforming schools and offers an alternative to the Opportunity School District (OSD) plan that Georgia voters did not approve in Nov. 2016.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee.

**[SB 149](#)** (Sen. Emanuel Jones, 10th) details training requirements for School Resource Officers.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee.

**[SB 150](#)** (Sen. Emanuel Jones, 10th) requires a code of conduct for law enforcement officers assigned to or employed by a local school system, beginning in the 2017-18 school year. Under the bill, school systems must provide students with a School Resource Officer Student Reference Guide to enhance personal relationships and understanding between law enforcement officers, students, and staff. The guides must be developed by law enforcement agencies in cooperation with the local boards of education.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee.

**[SB 152](#)** (Sen. Emanuel Jones, 10th) amends mandatory student attendance policy by precluding students from being suspended or expelled without being assigned to an alternative education program and by setting a two-semester maximum for assignment to alternative programs. The bill provides an exception to the two-semester maximum for serious offenses, which include physical assault or battery of school personnel or students, bullying, and unlawful use or possession of illegal drugs or alcohol.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee.



## STABLE, SELF-SUFFICIENT, PRODUCTIVE FAMILIES

**[HB 242](#)** (Rep. Brian Prince, 127th) requires child welfare agencies to notify the applicable military family advocacy program in the event of an abuse allegation that relates to a child with an active-duty military parent or guardian.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Juvenile Justice Committee.

**[HB 267](#)** (Rep. Kimberly Alexander, 66th) requires all employers to implement a sick-leave policy that allows employees to earn and accrue at least 56 hours of paid sick leave per year.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Industry and Labor Committee.

**[HB 305](#)** (Rep. Beth Beskin, 54th) adds stepparents and former stepparents to the list of third parties who may be awarded custody of a child in certain circumstances when it's determined by a court to be in the best interest of the child.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Juvenile Justice Committee.

**[HB 307](#)** (Rep. Sandra Scott, 76th) requires that students from a foster home or homeless situation be classified as in-state for tuition purposes within the University System of Georgia and the Technical College

System of Georgia (TCSG). The bill also stipulates that state-funded foster care assistance will not be counted as income for purposes of calculating financial aid.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Higher Education Committee.

**SB 3** (Sen. Lindsey Tippins, 37th), the Creating Opportunities Needed Now to Expand Credentialed Training (CONNECT) Act, directs the TCSG State Board, in consultation with industry representatives, to annually identify fields of study in industries that address a critical workforce need and are linked to occupations in the skilled-trade industry or an emerging technology. Under the bill, the SBOE must also include industry credentialing when developing policies and guidelines for awarding high-school credit.

**Status:** The Senate Education and Youth Committee passed the bill on Feb. 10.

**SB 131** (Sen. Blake Tillery, 19th) requires adoption proceedings to be stayed while a termination of parental rights appeal is pending.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the Senate Judiciary Committee.



## THRIVING COMMUNITIES

**HB 2** (Rep. Jason Spencer, 180th) extends by two additional years (until July 1, 2019) a window of opportunity for plaintiffs of any age to file civil actions related to childhood sexual abuse. Until HB 17, the Hidden Predator Act, was passed in 2015, adult victims were unable to file civil action suits due to expired statutes of limitations.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Judiciary Committee.

**HB 32** (Rep. Joyce Chandler, 105th) amends the definition of sexual assault to include sexual contact between an employee or agent of a school with a student enrolled in the same school. Current law only applies to teachers, principals, assistant principals, or other administrators in a school. The bill also expands the definition to include sexual contact between employees or agents of a correctional facility, juvenile detention facility, facility providing services to a person with a disability, or facility providing child welfare and youth services and a person in custody of any such facility. The law currently only applies to employees and agents of the specific facility in which the person is in custody.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee. A subcommittee discussed it on Feb. 7, but no vote was taken. Representatives of the Professional Standards Commission and the Professional Association of Educators testified in support of the bill, but concerns were raised that the language was too broad.

**HB 86** (Rep. Mary Margaret Oliver, 82nd) expands the definition of sexual abuse to include acts involving trafficking a person for sexual servitude.

**Status:** The House Juvenile Justice Committee passed the bill on Feb. 9.

**HB 116** (Rep. Bert Reeves, 34th) adds aggravated assault with a firearm to the list of juvenile offenses (ages 13 to 17) for which superior courts will have original jurisdiction.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee and was scheduled for discussion on Feb. 13.

**[HB 250](#)** (Rep. Mandi Ballinger, 23rd) provides that an employee of an early care and education program who has received a satisfactory fingerprint and record check within the previous 24 months is exempt from an additional background check for purposes of providing care in a foster home.

**Status:** The House Juvenile Justice Committee passed the bill on Feb. 9.

**[HB 259](#)** (Rep. Alan Powell, 32nd) adds aggravated assault or battery to the list of juvenile offenses (ages 13 to 17) for which superior courts will have original jurisdiction.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Juvenile Justice Committee.

**[HB 293](#)** (Rep. Deborah Silcox, 52nd) allows a court to admit hearsay evidence from a child (under 17 years) that describes sexual contact or physical abuse, provided that notice is given to the accused prior to trial and the child testifies at the trial.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee.

**[SB 4](#)** (Sen. Renee Unterman, 45th) establishes the Georgia Mental Health Treatment Task Force to examine the current mental health landscape and the effectiveness of mental health services and programs.

**Status:** The Senate passed the bill on Feb. 7, and it's now assigned to the House Health and Human Services Committee.