



CONNECTED to Public Policy



Integrating State Policy with Local Solutions

Feb. 21, 2017

House Passes FY18 Budget that Includes Increase for Georgia Family Connection

The House and Senate agreed on a final version of the Amended FY17 budget, which Gov. Nathan Deal received and signed on Feb. 15, while the House passed its version of the FY18 budget on Feb. 17—which includes \$238,500 of restored funds for Georgia Family Connection. If agreed to by the Senate and signed by the governor, these funds will increase each Collaborative’s appropriation from \$47,000 to \$48,500.

Tornado Relief

Deal announced that 10 more south Georgia counties impacted by recent tornadoes are approved to receive [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) grants](#) to assist with relief efforts, bringing the total to 21. The new counties that will receive public assistance are: Appling, Berrien, Brantley, Bulloch, Echols, Lowndes, Randolph, Tattnall, Upson, and Ware.

Budget

Amended FY17 Budget

Highlights of changes made to the finalized 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, and the Senate recommended \$5.58 million. The final version of the budget includes \$5 million.
- In Testing, the governor's budget recommended \$3.5 million within the University System of Georgia's budget to develop a K-3 assessment of math and reading skills in partnership with GaDOE and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA). The House reduced the funds to \$2.5 million. The Senate agreed with that amount, but moved the funding to GaDOE. The final version of the budget includes \$2.5 million in GaDOE with this language: "Upon consultation with districts that have vetted assessments for reliability and using a competitive bidding process, increase funds for research-based reading and math assessment tools that provide real-time data analysis on progress."

Department of Human Services (DHS)

- The governor recommended—and the House's version of the budget included—an additional \$28.6 million in state funds (\$32.7 million total) to grow the use of out-of-home care. The Senate reduced the amount to \$27 million in state funds (\$30.9 million total), but the final version reflects the original \$28.6 million.
- The House added \$974,712 to increase Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) foster care per diem rates by 57 percent, effective April 1, 2017. These funds would have moved up the implementation date of an increase included in Deal's FY18 budget recommendations. 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. The final version of the budget eliminates any increases in the Amended FY17 budget, but language directs DHS and the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget to coordinate to increase foster parent per diem rates.
- The House added \$746,243 to implement a \$1-per-day increase for relative foster care providers, effective April 1, 2017. The Senate agreed with the addition, but the final version of the budget reflects an elimination of those funds.

Department of Public Health (DPH)

- The governor's budget recommended \$651,897 to replace federal funds to continue providing women's health services and family planning. The House and Senate agreed on the 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 final version includes the \$651,897 and the Senate's language.
- The Senate reduced funding for Adolescent Health and Youth Development by \$1 million, and the final version reflects that reduction.
- The Senate reduced funds for the Office of Children and Families by \$628,263, and the final version reflects that reduction.

FY18 Budget

Highlights of the FY18 budget passed by the House include:

Juvenile Courts

The governor's budget included \$281,024 for one director and two coordinator positions with the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative. The House reduced the amount to \$158,408 to fund only the coordinator positions.

Department of Community Health (DCH)

- The House added \$500,000 for two Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) community start-up grants for Cook and Lincoln counties.
- In Medicaid and PeachCare, existing state funds will be used with a federal match to provide a 5-percent reimbursement increase for select dental codes.

Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)

The governor's budget transferred 135 Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) positions from DHS to DECAL. The House added language clarifying that \$9,777,346 in existing federal funds will be used to provide eligibility services.

Department of Education (DOE)

- The House added \$150,000 to Agricultural Education to increase funds for Young Farmer programs in Newton and Fannin counties.
- The House added \$300,000 to Central Office for statewide Positive Behavior and Intervention Support (PBIS) trainers.
- The House added \$25,000 to Communities in Schools to increase funds for local affiliates.
- The governor's budget recommended \$178,289 to add school nurses, and the House reduced that amount to \$154,989.
- The House added \$4 million for school counselors and an additional \$445,145 for counselors at schools that have a large military student population.
- In Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs), the House added \$1.27 million for PBIS specialists to convert part-time staff to full-time staff.
- The House transferred \$1.47 million to GOSA to provide an AP STEM exam for every student taking an AP STEM course.

Office of the Governor

- The House directed GOSA to use \$1.5 million in existing innovation grant funds for a competitive grant program that will provide certified school counselor-graduation specialists for the lowest-performing high schools in the state, giving priority to the chronically failing schools list.

- The House directed GOSA to continue providing \$600,000 in grants to local school systems to increase participation and achievement in AP STEM courses.

Department of Human Services (DHS)

- The House added \$500,000 for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) to enhance statewide capacity.
- The House added \$1.5 million to provide a \$5-per-hour increase for DFCS Special Assistant Attorneys General (SAAGs).
- In Out-of-Home Care, the governor's budget added \$30.9 million in state funds (\$35.3 million total) for growth in out-of-home care utilization. The House reduced the amount to \$20 million in state funds (\$20 million total).
- The governor's budget included \$3.89 million in state funds (\$12.3 million total) to increase funds for DFCS foster parent per diem rates by 57 percent. The House budget includes \$10.72 million in state funds (\$12.54 million total) to increase DFCS foster care per diem rates by \$10.
- The House added \$14.9 million in state funds for the first installment of a two-year plan to increase relative foster care provider per diem rates by \$5 this year and \$5 next year, as well as \$5.25 million in state funds (\$6.14 million total) for the first installment of a two-year plan to increase DFCS foster care per diem rates by \$5 this year and \$5 next year.
- The House added \$238,500 to Georgia Family Connection to increase each county's allocation from \$47,000 to \$48,500.

Public Defender Council

The House included \$782,564 for 10 additional juvenile public defenders and \$307,546 to annualize funds for 15 juvenile public defenders.

Department of Public Health (DPH)

The House included \$1.39 million for public health formula grants to counties to complete the phase-in of the new general grant-in-aid formula to hold counties harmless.

Schedule

Legislators were in session Tuesday through Friday last week, completing 20 of 40 legislative days. They are scheduled to be in session Tuesday through Friday this week.

The House and Senate previously 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 28 (Rep. Billy Mitchell, 88th) requires all public and private schools to test drinking water for lead contamination.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee and scheduled for a hearing by the House Education Subcommittee on Early Learning and K-12 Education on Feb. 21.

HB 65 (Rep. Allen Peake, 141st) expands the number of diagnoses that legally can be treated with cannabis oil. The additional eligible diagnoses are specifically identified in the bill: Tourette's syndrome, autism spectrum disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, Alzheimer's disease, HIV, and intractable pain that has not responded to medical or surgical measures for more than three months.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee and scheduled for a hearing on Feb. 21.

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 bill passed the House on Feb. 16, and it's now assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee.

HB 200 (Rep. Mark Newton, 123rd) requires local boards of education to adopt policies authorizing students to carry and self-administer sunscreen.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee and scheduled for a hearing by the Education Subcommittee on Early Learning and K-12 Education on Feb. 21.

HB 228 (Rep. Brad Raffensperger, 50th) requires health plans to cover one hearing aid per impaired ear, not to exceed \$3,000 per hearing aid for individuals under age 19. A companion bill, **SB 206** (Sen. P.K. Martin, 9th), was introduced in the Senate.

Status of HB 228: The bill is assigned to the House Insurance Committee.

Status of SB 206: The bill is not yet assigned to a committee.

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 and is scheduled for a hearing by the Education Subcommittee on Early Learning and K-12 Education on Feb. 21.

SB 16 (Sen. Ben Watson, 1st) adds autism spectrum disorder as a diagnosis eligible for treatment with cannabis oil and that lowers the maximum percent of THC permitted for medical treatment from 5 to 3 percent.

Status: The Senate passed the bill on Feb. 16, and it's now assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee.

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 Senate Insurance and Labor Committee passed the bill on Feb. 15.



CHILDREN SUCCEEDING IN SCHOOL

HB 24 (Rep. Billy Mitchell, 88th) directs the State Board of Education to establish an incentive pay program to retain and employ quality teachers in schools with high percentages of children from low-income families.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee. A subcommittee held a hearing on the bill on Feb. 15, but no vote was taken.

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. A subcommittee held a hearing on the bill on Feb. 14, but no vote was taken.

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. A subcommittee passed the bill on Feb. 14.

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 didn't approve in Nov. 2016.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee, which heard testimony and discussed the bill on Feb. 16. The committee is expected to hear—and possibly vote—on a substitute version of the bill this week.

HB 376 (Rep. Brenda Lopez, 99th) expands eligibility for the HOPE Scholarship by eliminating the provision that states students are ineligible seven years after high-school graduation or its equivalent.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Higher 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. The committee held a hearing on the bill on Feb. 14, but no vote was taken.

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. The committee held a hearing on the bill on Feb. 14, but no vote was taken.

[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. The committee discussed the bill on Feb. 17, but no vote was taken.



STABLE, SELF-SUFFICIENT, PRODUCTIVE FAMILIES

[HB 124](#) (Rep. David Clark, 98th) revises Georgia law related to fraud in obtaining public assistance, food stamps, or Medicaid to include those who knowingly or intentionally aid or abet a recipient in obtaining or attempting to obtain a benefit to which he or she is not entitled.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee. A subcommittee held a hearing and passed the bill on Feb. 7, and the full committee is scheduled to hear the bill on Feb. 22.

[HB 159](#) (Rep. Bert Reeves, 34th), a comprehensive revision of Georgia's adoption code, lowers the age one can access the adoption reunion registry from 21 to 18, eases foreign adoptions procedures, and permits nonresidents to grant adoption of his or her child.

Status: The House Judiciary Committee passed the bill on Feb. 16.

[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 House Juvenile Justice Committee passed the bill on Feb. 16.

[HB 330](#) (Rep. Stacey Evans, 89th) adds regional DFCS caseworkers and county and district DFCS directors as contact names in notices sent to adult relatives of a child removed from parental custody to explain options a relative has to participate in the care and placement of the child. The notices must also include information about financial assistance options for the relative.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Human Relations and Aging Committee, which is scheduled to hear the bill on Feb. 21.

[HB 331](#) (Rep. Stacey Evans, 89th) authorizes a kinship caregiver, on behalf of a child residing with the caregiver, to give legal consent for the child to receive educational and medical services and to participate in school activities.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Human Relations and Aging Committee, which is scheduled to hear the bill on Feb. 21.

[HB 359](#) (Rep. Barry Fleming, 121st) allows a parent to delegate caregiving authority for their child to an individual who resides in Georgia and is a relative or fictive kin for one year or less by executing a power of attorney.

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

SB 3 (Sen. Lindsey Tippins, 37th), the Creating Opportunities Needed Now to Expand Credentialed Training (CONNECT) Act, directs the Technical College System of Georgia 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 State Board of Education must also include industry credentialing when developing policies and guidelines for awarding high-school credit.

Status: The Senate passed the bill on Feb. 17. It has not yet been assigned to a House committee.

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

Status: The Senate Judiciary Committee passed the bill on Feb. 17.

SB 170 (Sen. Hunter Hill, 6th) establishes the Georgia SERVES Volunteer program and allows placement of a child in the temporary care of a Georgia SERVES volunteer to increase the number of volunteers helping with the foster care system. Under the bill, DHS is directed to establish a uniform certification system and guidelines for SERVES volunteers.

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



THRIVING COMMUNITIES

HB 37 (Rep. Earl Ehrhart, 36th) prohibits private postsecondary institutions in Georgia from adopting sanctuary policies for undocumented immigrant students and requires that state funding and state-administered federal funding be withheld from institutions in violation of the prohibition.

Status: The House Higher Education Committee passed the bill on Feb. 1.

HB 116 (Rep. Bert Reeves, 34th) adds aggravated assault with a firearm and aggravated battery against peace officers 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 is scheduled for discussion on Feb. 22.

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, and the full House is expected to vote on the bill on Feb. 21.

HB 280 (Rep. Mandi Ballinger, 23rd), known as the Campus Carry bill, allows individuals ages 21 and older to carry guns on public university campuses, except for into dormitories, athletic events, and preschool or daycare centers.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee. A subcommittee passed the bill on Feb. 16, and the full committee was scheduled to discuss—and possibly vote—on the bill on Feb. 20.

[HB 293](#) (Rep. Deborah Silcox, 52nd) allows a court to admit hearsay evidence from a child under 17 years old 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, which is scheduled to hear the bill on Feb. 22.

[HB 391](#) (Rep. David Clark, 98th) expands the locations where a mother may leave a newborn child without risk of prosecution to include fire and police stations.

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

[SB 201](#) (Sen. Butch Miller, 49th) requires employers to allow employees who earn sick leave to use up to five days of accrued leave to care for immediate family members—including an employee's child, spouse, grandchild, grandparent, or parent.

Status: The bill is assigned to the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee.