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# Low-Performing Schools Bill Moves Ahead as Crossover Day Approaches

Three legislative days remain before Crossover Day, which is scheduled for Friday, March 3. Crossover Day marks the final day legislation can be moved from one chamber to the other in order to be eligible for passage this year, although language from stalled bills may be tacked onto bills that cross when they address similar issues. Since 2017 is the first year of a two-year session, bills that don't pass this year remain active during the 2018 legislative session.

### Low-Performing Schools

The House continued work on [HB 338](#) (Rep. Kevin Tanner, 9th), which deals with low-performing schools. The House Education Committee passed its version of the bill last week, and the full House is expected to vote on it this week.

According to a [detailed summary](#) of the bill created by the Georgia School Boards Association, changes in the committee substitute version include:

- requirements for greater collaboration between the Chief Turnaround Officer and the State School Superintendent;
- more specifics regarding how schools will be prioritized for intervention; and
- clarity regarding the interventions available for schools.

Read more about the low-performing schools issue in a [guest blog](#) by Dana Rickman, policy and research director for the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education.

## Criminal Justice Reform

Gov. Nathan Deal's Council on Criminal Justice Reform released its [2017 report](#) last week, which reviews the progress of reforms to the adult and juvenile justice systems enacted since 2011 and makes recommendations for ongoing improvements.

The report notes a significant 36-percent reduction in the number of youth in secure confinement and an 11-percent decline in those in secure detention. Commitments to the Department of Juvenile Justice have decreased by 46 percent, as access to community-based alternatives to detention has increased.

## Budget

The Senate is working on its version of the FY18 budget as the last of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee meetings are expected to take place this week.

## Schedule

Legislators were in session Tuesday through Friday last week, completing 24 of 40 legislative days. They are scheduled to be in session Monday through Wednesday this week. They will adjourn until Crossover Day on Friday.

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. **SB 29** (Sen. Vincent Fort, 39th) is a similar bill that requires testing of drinking water in all child care learning centers as well as public and private primary and secondary schools. Remediation where necessary is required.

**Status of HB 28:** The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee. It was discussed in a House Education Subcommittee on Feb. 22, but no action was taken due to questions about cost.

**Status of SB 29:** The bill was passed by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and sent on to the Senate Rules Committee, which will determine if the bill goes to the full Senate for a vote.

**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, which discussed it on Feb. 21. The committee is scheduled to discuss the bill again on Feb. 27 and may vote on it then.

**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. It was discussed in a subcommittee on Feb. 22, but no action was taken.

**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 assigned to the Senate Insurance Labor Committee and scheduled for discussion on Feb. 27.

**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 House passed the bill on Feb. 24, and it's not yet assigned to a committee.

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

**Status:** The House passed the bill on Feb. 23, and it's been assigned to the Senate Education and Youth 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. A subcommittee passed the bill on Feb. 23 after amending it to require that students in grades K-5 receive an average of 30 minutes of recess per day.

**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 under 18. The substitute version also lowers the maximum percent of THC permitted for medical treatment from 5 to 3 percent. The Senate passed the bill on Feb. 16, and it's now assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee.



**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. [HR 354](#), (Rep. Dar'shun Kendrick, 93rd), is a resolution urging the GaDOE, in consultation with DBHDD, to develop and provide a list of training materials on mental health issues to local school systems.

**Status of HB 77:** 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.

**Status of HR 354:** The resolution is assigned to the House Education Committee.

[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 House passed the bill on Feb. 24, and it's now assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee.

[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:** The House passed the bill on Feb. 24, and it's not yet assigned to a Senate 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 plan that Georgia voters didn't approve in Nov. 2016.

**Status:** The House Education Committee passed a substitute version of the bill on Feb. 24.

[SB 211](#) (Sen. Lindsey Tippins, 37th) requires consideration of local reading programs when establishing testing requirements. The bill also directs the State Board of Education to review current state and local assessment programs to determine a viable solution that meets the identified needs of local school systems, parents, and students for ongoing assessments throughout the school year that can be combined to meet state and federal accountability requirements. The State Board of Education will be required to complete and post their review and recommended solution no later than Sept. 1, 2017.

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

[SB 243](#) (Sen. Jeff Mullis, 53rd) creates a pilot program for developing and implementing agricultural education in elementary schools that will begin in the 2018-19 school year. The GaDOE is authorized through its Agricultural Education Program to select six public elementary schools for the pilot, with one school in each of six existing regions.

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



## 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 House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee passed the bill, and it was scheduled for a vote on the House floor on Feb. 27.

**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 passed the bill on Feb. 23, and it's now assigned to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

**HB 330** (Rep. Stacey Evans, 89th) adds regional Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) caseworkers as well as 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 House Human Relations and Aging Committee passed the bill on Feb. 21. It's now assigned to the House Rules Committee, which will determine whether or not the bill will reach the full House for a vote.

**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 House Human Relations and Aging Committee passed the bill on Feb. 21. It's now assigned to the House Rules Committee, which will determine whether or not the bill will reach the full House for a vote.

**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, and a subcommittee passed it on Feb. 24.

**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, and it's now assigned to the House Education Committee.

**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, the Department of Human Services is directed to establish a uniform certification system and guidelines for SERVES volunteers.

**Status:** The bill is assigned to the Senate Special Judiciary Committee, and a hearing is scheduled for Feb. 27.



**THRIVING COMMUNITIES**

**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. Representatives of the Professional Standards Commission and the Professional Association of Educators testified in support of the bill in subcommittee, but concerns were raised that the language is too broad. The subcommittee passed the bill, and it was scheduled for a full committee discussion on Feb. 27.

**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 passed the bill on Feb. 22, and it's now assigned to the Senate Higher Education Committee.

**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 passed the bill on Feb. 22, and it's now assigned to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

**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 House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee passed the bill, and it's scheduled for a full House vote on Feb. 27.

**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 passed the bill on Feb. 21. It's now assigned to the Senate Special Judiciary Committee and scheduled for discussion on Feb. 27.

**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 and was scheduled for a vote on Feb. 27.

**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 House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee passed the bill on Feb. 22.

**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 Senate Insurance and Labor Committee passed the bill, and it's scheduled for a full Senate vote on Feb. 27.