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Budget and Education Bills Progress as Crossover Day Approaches

Education bills and the Amended FY18 and FY19 budgets continue to move forward as Crossover Day approaches. Crossover Day, which is scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 28, marks the final day legislation can be moved from one chamber to the other in order to be eligible for passage this year; however, language from bills that don't cross can still be inserted into bills that do cross.

Education

The House passed [HB 740](#) (Rep. Randy Nix, 69th) on Feb. 14 by a vote of 157-13, and it is now assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee. The bill prohibits students in grades K – 3 from being suspended from school for more than five days without them first being entered into the [Response to Intervention](#) (RTI) program, a four-tier model for identifying and addressing students' academic and behavioral needs. The original version of the bill called for evaluating a student for hearing, speech, and language issues. Nix amended the bill to use the RTI process, which also considers other factors.

The House passed [HB 763](#) (Rep. Randy Nix, 69th) on Feb. 15 by a vote of 155-6. That bill, which is also assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee, expands the duties of the School Attendance Protocol Committee to include reviewing and making policy recommendations regarding school climate to promote positive gains in student achievement scores and student and teacher morale while decreasing student suspensions, dropouts, and other negative aspects of the school environment.

Budget

The Senate passed its version of the [Amended FY18 budget](#) on Feb. 15. The House and Senate will now begin the process of agreeing on a final version of that budget. There is no change to Family Connection's funding in the Amended FY18 budget.

Minimal changes made by the Senate to the House's version of the Amended FY18 budget include:

Department of Community Health

The Senate increased funding from \$75,000 recommended by the House to \$100,000 to identify a postsecondary institution within the state as an appropriate location for the Rural Center for Health Care Innovation and Sustainability, as recommended by the House Rural Development Council.

Department of Education

The Senate transferred \$1.5 million from the Audio-Video Technology and Film Grants program to the Technology/Career Education program to provide \$1.25 million in grants for equipment to local school systems and \$250,000 for middle school STEM coding. The Senate also added an extra \$250,000 for the middle school STEM funding, bringing that total to \$500,000.

Department of Human Services

- The Senate included language changing the name of the Child Care Services program to the Child Care Assistance program.
- The Senate disagreed with the House on spending \$550,000 to design, construct, and purchase equipment for a new Division of Family and Children Services building in Ben Hill County.
- The Senate increased funds for legal services by \$1.6 million.
- The House reallocated \$1.73 million by reducing funds throughout the Department of Human Services FY18 budget for personnel based on actual start dates. The Senate version changed the House's overall reduction to \$1 million.

Department of Juvenile Justice

The Senate added \$129,000 for one-time startup costs for the culinary vocational program at the Macon Youth Development Center.

Department of Public Health

The Senate reduced funding for the Office for Children and Families from \$827,428 to \$654,280.

Student Finance Commission and Authority

The Senate reduced funds to meet the projected need for dual enrollment from \$10.7 million to \$9.55 million.

Schedule

Legislators were in session Monday through Thursday last week and are scheduled to be in session Tuesday through Friday this week after taking Monday off for President's Day.

The General Assembly previously passed an [adjournment resolution](#) setting the legislative calendar for the rest of the 2018 session. Sine Die, the final day of the session, is scheduled for Thursday, March 29. Legislators can change the schedule by passing another adjournment resolution.

Legislation

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



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, provided that recess will not be required on any day when a student has physical education or structured activity time. Local boards will establish written policies to ensure that recess is a safe experience for students, is scheduled so that it provides a break during academic learning, and is not withheld as punishment.

Status: The House passed the bill on March 3, 2017. The Senate Education and Youth Committee passed a substitute version of the bill in 2017 clarifying that recess for grades K – 5 will be scheduled every day unless reasonable circumstances impede such recess, but it didn't receive a vote in the Senate. The bill was recommitted to the Senate Education and Youth Committee, which passed the bill again on Feb. 13. It is now assigned to the Senate Rules Committee.

HB 655 (Rep. Rick Williams, 145th) requires every public school to post a sign containing the toll-free number operated by the Division of Family and Children Services for reporting child abuse or neglect.

Status: The House passed the bill on Feb. 8, and it is now assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee.

HB 743 (Rep. David Clark, 98th) requires the Georgia Department of Education to develop and provide guidelines and other relevant materials to inform students participating in interscholastic athletic activities about the nature and warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest.

Status: The House Education Committee passed the bill on Feb. 18, and it is now assigned to the House Rules Committee.

HB 844 (Rep. Penny Houston, 170th) expands the membership of the Georgia Commission on Hearing Impaired and Deaf Persons and creates a statewide coordinated longitudinal data management system for all children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Status: The bill was originally assigned to the House Health and Human Services Committee but was reassigned to the House Education Committee on Feb. 14. An Academic Achievement Subcommittee is scheduled to hear the bill on Wednesday, Feb. 21.



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HB 763 (Rep. Randy Nix, 69th) expands the duties of the School Attendance Protocol Committee to include reviewing and making policy recommendations regarding school climate to promote positive gains in student achievement scores and student and teacher morale while decreasing student suspensions, dropouts, and other negative aspects of the school environment.

Status: The House passed the bill on Feb. 15, and it is now assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee.

HB 852 (Rep. Michael Smith, 41st) allows a student to remain enrolled in a public school through the end of the school year after the student moves to a different attendance zone.

Status: The House Education Committee passed the bill on Feb. 15, and it is now assigned to the House Rules Committee.

HB 926 (Rep. Beth Beskin, 54th) requires each local school system to provide Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) annual statistics and data on students' health and physical education. The State Board of Education is also required to complete a report on student health and physical education and publish the report on the GaDOE website.

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

HB 928 (Rep. Rick Williams, 145th) extends HOPE Scholarship eligibility from seven years to 15 years from a student's graduation from high school or equivalent. An exception is also provided for military service years, which do not count toward the 15-year period.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Higher Education Committee and scheduled for discussion in a joint meeting of the House and Senate Higher Education Committees on Wednesday, Feb. 21.

HB 932 (Rep. Tommy Benton, 31st) raises the age of mandatory school attendance from 16 to 17 years.

Status: The bill is assigned to the House Education Committee and scheduled for discussion in an Academic Achievement Subcommittee on Feb. 20.

HR 1102 (Rep. Sam Park, 101st) creates the House Study Committee on Increasing Access to Pre-K and After-School Programs.

Status: The resolution is assigned to the House Special Rules Committee.

SB 401 (Sen. Lindsey Tippins, 37th) requires consideration of students' individual graduation plans during eighth grade when scheduling courses in ninth grade, and expands the role of school counselors to include career-oriented aptitude and career-interest guidance. The bill also directs the Georgia Department of Education to review each school counselor's role, workload, and program service delivery in grades 6 – 12 and to provide a report to the State Board of Education and General Assembly by Dec. 31, 2018.

Status: The bill was amended to include language requiring all postsecondary institutions with dual-enrollment students to provide enrollment and student record data to the Governor's Office of Student Achievement. The Senate Education and Youth Committee passed the amended version of the bill on Feb. 15, and it is now assigned to the Senate Rules Committee.

SB 405 (Sen. Fran Millar, 40th) provides for grants of \$1,500 per semester to low-income students enrolled in a University System of Georgia institution. The students must meet one of three criteria: earned SAT scores of at least 480 on reading and 530 on math; passed an end-of-pathway assessment under the Carl Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act; or completed a work-based learning experience.

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

SR 761 (Sen. Fran Millar, 40th) creates the Senate Study Committee on Dyslexia. Two related resolutions—**HR 1017** (Rep. John Corbett, 174th) and **SR 714** (Sen. Jennifer Jordan, 6th)—urge schools, local educational agencies, and the Georgia Department of Education to address the educational impact of dyslexia.

Status of HR 1017: The House Education Committee passed the resolution on Feb. 15, and it is now assigned to the House Rules Committee.

Status of SR 714: The Senate adopted the resolution on Feb. 7.

Status of SR 761: The resolution is assigned to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.



STABLE, SELF-SUFFICIENT, PRODUCTIVE FAMILIES

HB 668 (Rep. Betty Price, 48th) allows a petition for guardianship to be filed for a proposed ward that is 17 years old if the petitioner has a good faith reason to believe that the child will need a guardian upon turning 18.

Status: The House passed the bill on Feb. 13, and it is now assigned to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

HB 927 (Rep. Chad Nimmer, 178th) requires the Division of Family and Children Services to provide certain information to a caregiver, foster parent, pre-adoptive parent, or relative no later than 30 days after placement of a child. This information includes the child's most recent physical and dental exams; any available information on the child's known medical conditions and medications; and recommendations from the child's most recent developmental assessment, trauma assessment, and psychological evaluation.

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

SB 97 (Sen. Elena Parent, 42nd) requires an amendment to the Georgia child care plan to extend the length of time child care subsidies are offered to parents attending a job training or educational program, increasing it from up to 12 months to up to 24 months.

Status: The bill was introduced in 2017 and assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee, which took no action during that session. The committee recently held a hearing on the bill on Feb. 12, but no action was taken.



THRIVING COMMUNITIES

HB 513 (Rep. Pam Dickerson, 113th) requires the Department of Community Health to develop a sign to be posted at all medical facilities to inform the public that such facilities are authorized locations to leave a newborn child.

Status: The bill was introduced in 2017 and assigned to the House Health and Human Services Committee, which took no action during that session. The committee is scheduled to hear the bill on Feb. 20.

HB 762 (Rep. Wes Cantrell, 22nd) provides for age-appropriate sex abuse and assault awareness and prevention education in grades K – 9.

Status: The House Education Committee passed the bill on Feb. 15, and it is now assigned to the House Rules Committee.

HB 769 (Rep. Rick Jasperse, 11th) implements recommendations from the House Rural Development Council relating to health care, including establishing micro-hospitals, which would have between two to seven beds and provide 24-hour services in counties with fewer than 50,000 residents, as well as a Rural Center for Health Care Innovation and Sustainability within the Department of Community Health's State Office of Rural Health.

Status: The House Health and Human Services Committee passed the bill on Feb. 14, and it is now assigned to the House Rules Committee.

HB 920 (Rep. Katie Dempsey, 13th) creates a limited exception to the confidentiality of adoption records, allowing the Division of Family and Children Services to share with the Office of the Child Advocate information concerning an adopted child when the child dies, suffers a near fatality, or is an alleged victim of child abuse or neglect.

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

SB 337 (Sen. Renee Unterman, 45th) updates current law related to the admissibility of a child's out-of-court statements describing sexual contact or physical abuse, specifying that the code section applies to any motion made, or hearing or trial commenced, on or after the effective date of the subsection.

Status: The Senate Judiciary Committee passed the bill on Feb. 8, and it is now assigned to the Senate Rules Committee.

SB 375 (Sen. William Ligon, 3rd) creates the "Keep Faith in Adoption and Foster Care Act," which allows a child-placing agency to decline to accept a referral for foster care or adoption services under a contract with the state based on the child-placing agency's sincerely held religious beliefs, and bars the state from taking adverse action against the agency.

Status: The bill is assigned to the Senate Judiciary Committee, which is scheduled to hear the bill on Feb. 20.