



CONNECTED to Public Policy



Integrating State Policy with Local Solutions

March 13, 2018

Deal Signs Adoption Reform, Amended FY18 Budget; House FY19 Budget Restores Family Connection Funds

On March 6, Gov. Nathan Deal signed [HB 159](#) (Rep. Bert Reeves, 34th), the comprehensive adoption reform legislation filed in 2017.

The legislation didn't pass during last year's session after the Senate added language allowing state-funded private agencies to decline to place children with same-sex parents. The Senate amended HB 159 and removed that language earlier this session, but added new language from [HB 359](#) (Rep. Barry Fleming, 121st) allowing a parent to temporarily delegate caregiving authority to an individual through power of attorney. The House then amended the bill once more to address concerns expressed by Deal about language from HB 359, and the Senate agreed to the compromise version of HB 159.

In a [press release](#) following the bill signing ceremony, Deal stated, "This new law will benefit the thousands of children, from newborns to foster children, who are in need of a loving and permanent home."

Budget

The House and Senate agreed on a final version of the Amended FY18 budget last week, and Deal signed that budget on March 9. The House passed its version of the FY19 budget on March 10, which includes \$238,500 of restored funds for Family Connection. These funds will increase each Collaborative's appropriation from \$48,500 to \$50,000 if agreed to by the Senate and signed by Deal.

Amended FY18

Highlights of changes made to the finalized Amended FY18 budget include:

Department of Community Health

The Senate increased the House's recommendation of \$75,000 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. The final agreement includes \$100,000 "to initiate a rural health center."

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. The final agreement didn't approve the transfer of funds to the Technology/Career Education program, but it did include \$500,000 in one-time funds for enhancing STEM preparation in rural communities by providing middle school coding grants for equipment and for teachers' professional development.

Department of Human Services

- The House agreed with the Senate to include language changing the name of the Child Care Services program to the Child Care Assistance program.
- The Senate agreed 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; however, the final agreement didn't include an increase for legal services.
- The House reallocated \$1.73 million by reducing funds throughout the Department of Human Services (DHS) FY18 budget for personnel based on actual start dates. The Senate version changed the House's overall reduction to \$1 million, and the final agreement reduced DHS funding by \$2.12 million.

Department of Juvenile Justice

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

Department of Public Health

The final agreement didn't include a Senate reduction of funding for the Office for Children and Families from \$827,428 to \$654,280.

Student Finance Commission and Authority

The final agreement included a Senate reduction in funds for dual enrollment from \$10.7 million to \$9.55 million.

FY19 Budget

Highlights of the FY19 budget passed by the House include:

Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities

- The governor’s budget included \$3 million for supported employment and education assistance for an additional 500 young adults as recommended by the Commission on Children’s Mental Health. The House reduced the funding to \$1.5 million and delayed the funding until Jan. 1, 2019.
- The House added \$1.4 million for the development and statewide availability of a mental health crisis services and suicide prevention mobile application in coordination with the Georgia Crisis and Access hotline.

Department of Community Affairs

The governor’s budget cut \$25,000 in one-time funds for Second Harvest of South Georgia. The House restored the funds.

Department of Community Health

The House added \$500,000 for Federally Qualified Health Center start-up grants for a primary care center in Bryan County and a behavioral health center in Emanuel County.

Department of Early Care and Learning

The House included language directing the utilization of grant funds available in the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement for birth-to-5 literacy/numeracy in rural Georgia.

Department of Education

- The House transferred \$1 million from the Central Office program to the Chief Turnaround Officer program.
- The House added \$227,570 for the Turnaround Schools Rural Character Education Grant for soft skills training and character education development for the lowest-performing schools in rural Georgia.
- The House transferred funds (\$131 million) for pupil transportation from the Quality Basic Education program to the recreated Pupil Transportation program.
- The House added \$10 million for an annual allotment for school bus replacement.
- The House included language directing the Department of Education to provide a report on the number of counselors and nurses per school and school system to the General Assembly by Sept. 1, 2018.
- The House added \$1.6 million in funding to the Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) program for student mental health awareness training. The House also added language directing the RESAs to promote student awareness of the crisis access line mobile application funded in the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities through the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports program and mental health awareness training.

Governor’s Office of Student Achievement

The House added \$750,000 to provide funds for one non-STEM Advanced Placement exam fee for low-income students.

Department of Human Services

- The House added \$490,000 to increase funds for child advocacy centers to provide an increase in equipment and therapeutic, medical, and outreach services.
- The governor's budget included funds for a \$2.50 increase for relative foster care and for child placement agency foster parent per diem rates. The House added funding to increase the per diem rates for both categories by \$3.75.
- The House added \$238,500 to Family Connection to restore each county's allocation to \$50,000.

Department of Public Health

- The House added \$2 million to address maternal mortality in Georgia.
- The House added \$551,858 to increase occupational and physical therapy rates in the Babies Can't Wait program.

Georgia Student Finance Commission

The governor's budget included \$34 million in additional dual-enrollment funding to meet the projected need. The House reduced the funding to \$26.7 million and added language stating that the funding would be based on the implementation of 15 credit hours per student per semester and a policy requiring that courses be taught by higher education faculty not directly employed by a high school effective Jan. 1, 2019.

Juvenile Courts

The governor's budget included \$122,600 for one Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative statewide coordinator position. The House cut this funding.

Schedule

Legislators were in session Monday, Wednesday, and Friday last week, completing 32 of 40 days. They are scheduled to be in session Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday this week.

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.



HEALTHY CHILDREN

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 passed the bill on Feb. 22. It is assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee and scheduled for discussion on Wednesday, March 14.

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 House passed the bill on Feb. 28. The Senate Health and Human Services Committee passed the bill on March 9, and it is now assigned to the Senate Rules Committee.

HR 1375 (Rep. Katie Dempsey, 13th) encourages the State of Georgia to advise all public and private schools to educate students and parents about the dangers of meningococcal disease.

Status: The House Health and Human Services Committee passed the resolution on March 7, and it is now assigned to the House Rules Committee.



CHILDREN SUCCEEDING IN SCHOOL

HB 740 (Rep. Randy Nix, 69th) prohibits schools from suspending students in preschool through third grade for more than five days without first entering the student into the Response to Intervention program, a four-tier model for identifying and addressing students' academic and behavioral needs.

Status: The House passed the bill on Feb. 14. It is now assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee, which held a hearing on the bill on March 5 and is expected to hear it again on Wednesday, March 14.

HB 852 (Rep. Michael Smith, 41st) allows for 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 passed the bill on Feb. 28. It is assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee and scheduled for discussion on Wednesday, March 14.

HB 963 (Rep. Buzz Brockway, 102nd) amends current law related to focused programs of study so that the State Workforce Development Board, in consultation with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the Technical College System of Georgia, will develop an annual list of high-wage and high-demand industry credentials and state licenses. The bill also requires GaDOE to distribute the information annually to all Georgia middle and high schools. **SB 139** (Sen. Hunter Hill, 6th) was amended to include language from HB 963.

Status of HB 963: The House Education Committee passed the bill on Feb. 23. It was not voted out of the House Rules Committee, so it did not cross.

Status of SB 139: The Senate passed the bill in 2017, but the House Education Committee didn't pass it. That committee passed a substitute version on March 9, which replaced the original language from SB 139 with language from HB 963. The bill is now assigned to the House Rules Committee.

SB 362 (Sen. Lindsey Tippins, 37th) provides for the establishment of an innovative assessment pilot program in up to 10 school systems. The bill seeks to deliver real-time feedback on student performance during the school year when problems can still be addressed.

Status: The Senate passed the bill on Feb. 15, and the House Education Committee passed it on March 9. The bill is now assigned to the House 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 passed the bill on Feb. 28, and the House Education Committee passed it on March 9. The bill is now assigned to the House Rules Committee.



HB 494 (Rep. Katie Dempsey, 13th) allows for hearsay in preliminary hearings on emergency closures of programs, defines criminal record for the purpose of background checks, and provides that background checks are not valid if an individual has been separated from employment for more than 180 days from an early care and education program.

Status: The bill was introduced in 2017. The House passed it on Feb. 28, 2018, and it is now assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee, which discussed the bill on March 8 and is expected to discuss it again on Wednesday, March 14.

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. The House passed it on Feb. 28, 2018, and the Senate Health and Human Services Committee passed it on March 9. The bill is now assigned to the Senate 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 House passed the bill on Feb. 28, and the Senate Health and Human Services Committee passed it on March 9. The bill is now assigned to the Senate Rules Committee.

HR 1414 (Rep. Rick Jasperse, 11th) creates the House Study Committee on School Security.

Status: The resolution is referred to the House Special Rules Committee, which is expected to discuss the resolution on March 13.

SB 357 (Sen. Dean Burke, 11th), “The Health Act,” forms a Health Coordination and Innovation Council of the State of Georgia, establishes a Health System Innovation Center, and creates the position of director of health care policy and strategic planning who reports directly to the governor. The bill establishes the center as a research organization that will utilize Georgia’s academic, public health policy, data, and workforce resources to develop new approaches for financing and delivering health care.

Status: The Senate passed the bill on Feb. 7, and it is now assigned to the House Health and Human Services Committee, which discussed the bill on March 6 and held it for further work. The bill was amended and now creates the Health Coordination and Innovation Council, but doesn’t include language creating the Health System Innovation Center.