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Senate Works to Finalize Budget as Sine Die Approaches

With only four legislative days left in the session, the pace has picked up at the Capitol. Committees worked hard last week to move bills through the legislative process. As is typical for this point in a legislative session, language from some stalled bills is being added to bills that are on the move, and some bills are being amended to include only the language from another bill, completely replacing the bill's original language.

Budget

The Senate is close to finalizing its version of the FY19 budget. With only five legislative days remaining, House and Senate budget leaders will have to work quickly to reach agreement on a final version of the appropriation bill. The General Assembly must pass the budget before funds can be spent by the state in FY19.

Schedule

Legislators were in session Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday last week, completing 35 of 40 days. They are scheduled to be in session Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 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.

Legislation

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



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. The Senate Education and Youth Committee passed a substitute version of the bill on March 14, which includes language from **HB 762** (Rep. Wes Cantrell, 22nd), providing for age-appropriate sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention education in grades K – 9. The bill is now assigned to the Senate Rules 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 passed the bill on Feb. 22. The Senate Education and Youth Committee passed it on March 14, and it is now assigned to the Senate 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 House passed the bill on Feb. 28, and the Senate passed it on March 15. The bill is now with Gov. Nathan Deal, who can sign or veto the bill, or allow it to become law without signing it.

HR 446 (Rep. William Boddie, 62nd) creates the Johnny Tolbert, III House Study Committee on Heatstroke. The bill is named for a 12-year-old who died from heatstroke during football practice in 2016. **Status:** The resolution was assigned to the House Health and Human Services Committee. The committee passed a substitute version of the resolution in 2017, but the full House didn't pass it. The committee passed the resolution again on March 15, 2018. It is now assigned to the House Rules Committee.

SB 118 (Sen. Renee Unterman, 45th), known as Ava's Law, increases the age for health insurance coverage for individuals with autism spectrum disorder from 6 to 12 and establishes a yearly cap of \$30,000 for coverage of applied behavior analysis treatment. **Status:** The Senate passed the bill on Feb. 8. The bill was amended by the House Insurance Committee to raise the age for coverage from age 6 to 20 and the yearly cap to \$35,000. The House passed the bill on March 15.



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. There will be no

prohibition from suspension if the student possessed a weapon or illegal drugs, or if the behavior endangers the safety of other students or school personnel.

Status: The House passed the bill on Feb. 14. The Senate Education and Youth Committee passed the bill on March 14, and it is now assigned to the Senate Rules Committee.

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. It is now assigned to the Senate Education and Youth Committee, which held a hearing on March 5. A vote on the bill was expected on March 19.

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 passed the bill on Feb. 28. The Senate Education and Youth Committee passed the bill on March 14, and it was scheduled for a vote on the Senate floor on March 19.

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 adopted the resolution on March 9.

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

Status of SR 761: The Senate Health and Human Services Committee passed the resolution, and it is now assigned to the Senate Rules 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. The Senate Judiciary Committee passed the bill on March 7, and it is now assigned to the Senate Rules 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 House passed the bill on Feb. 28. The Senate Health and Human Services Committee passed a substitute version of the bill on March 14 that replaced the bill's original language with language from **SB 351** (Sen. Renee Unterman, 45th). The substitute version expands the number of advanced practice registered nurses that a doctor can supervise under a nurse protocol agreement, as well as the scope of when nurses can order certain tests. The bill is now assigned to the Senate Rules Committee.

HB 982 (Rep. Chad Nimmer, 178th) allows a court to excuse the Division of Family and Children Services from continuing its “diligent search” for relatives or fictive kin after six months, if the child is living with a foster parent in a stable home environment.

Status: The House passed the bill on Feb. 28. The Senate Health and Human Services Committee passed a substitute version of the bill on March 15, adding clean-up language requested by the Division of Family and Children Services. The bill is now assigned to the Senate Rules Committee.



HB 494 (Rep. Katie Dempsey, 13th) allows for hearsay evidence to be admitted in preliminary hearings on emergency closures of early care and learning programs, revises the definition of "crime" for purposes of background checks, and provides that background checks aren't 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, and the House passed it on Feb. 28, 2018. The Senate Education and Youth Committee passed the bill on March 14, and it is now assigned to the Senate Rules Committee.

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 the House passed it on Feb. 28, 2018. The Senate Health and Human Services Committee passed a substitute version on March 9, requiring the Department of Health and Human Services to develop standards for signs to be posted at any medical facility and fire or police station to inform the general public that the facility is an authorized location to leave a newborn child. The Senate passed the bill on March 14, and it is now back in the House for agreement to the changes.

HB 732 (Rep. Deborah Silcox, 52nd) expands the scope of the law that criminalizes sex trafficking to include the act of patronizing an individual for sexually explicit conduct. **SB 335** (Sen. Renee Unterman, 45th) is a companion bill introduced in the Senate.

Status of HB 732: The House passed the bill on Feb. 23, and the Senate Judiciary Committee passed it on March 14. The bill was scheduled for a vote on the Senate floor on March 19.

Status of SB 335: The Senate passed the bill on Feb. 28, and it is now assigned to the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee.

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

Status: The House Education Committee passed the bill on Feb. 15. The House Rules Committee took no action on the bill, so it did not cross. Language from HB 762 was added to **HB 655** (Rep. Rick Williams, 145th), which 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. The House previously passed HB 655 on Feb. 8, and the Senate Education and Youth Committee passed the substitute version with the added language on March 14. HB 655 is now assigned to the Senate Rules Committee.

HB 972 (Rep. Wendell Willard, 51st) allows the Division of Family and Children Services to offer extended care youth services to foster youth between the ages of 18 – 21, and amends current law to require a transition plan be completed for every foster child in the 90-day period prior to him or her turning 18.

Status: The House passed the bill on Feb. 28. The bill was amended by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, adding language requiring that a child sign a voluntary placement agreement with DFCS in order to receive extended care youth services. Language from **HB 927** (Rep. Chad Nimmer, 178th) was also added to the bill, requiring DFCS to provide certain information to a caregiver, foster parent, pre-adoptive parent, or relative no later than 30 days after placement of a child. The Senate Health and Human Services Committee passed the amended version of HB 972, and it is now assigned to the Senate Rules Committee.

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

Status: The House Special Rules Committee passed the resolution on March 14, and it was scheduled to be on the House floor for a vote on March 19.

SB 352 (Rep. Renee Unterman, 45th) establishes a Commission on Substance Abuse and Recovery.

Status: The Senate passed the bill on Feb. 7. It is now assigned to the House Health and Human Services Committee, which has taken no action on the bill. The Senate Health and Human Services Committee added language from SB 352 to **HB 161** (Rep. Betty Price, 48th), which relates to employees and agents of syringe services programs. The House passed HB 161 on Feb. 21, and the Senate Health and Human Services Committee passed the amended version on March 14. The bill is now assigned to the Senate Rules Committee.

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 the House passed a substitute version on March 15. The House version of the bill creates the Health Coordination and Innovation Council, but doesn’t include language creating the Health System Innovation Center. The bill is now back in the Senate for agreement to the House’s changes.