

Gold Dome Report – Legislative Day 35

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The General Assembly wrapped up the penultimate week of the 2022 Legislative Session on Friday with a flurry of activity. The sprint toward Sine Die has accelerated, figuratively and literally, with House members racing from the House Chamber to the Senate Rules Committee room on Friday afternoon and seeking to pay homage to the all-powerful Rules Chairman and get their bills to the Senate floor.

The House still was still reveling over the last evening's homage for the Dean of the House, Representative Calvin Smyre (D-Columbus) as he departs the Capitol after this year's session for work at the federal level. Dean Smyre, as he is often called, is a nominee for an ambassadorship to the Dominican Republic. Last evening, his colleagues, and former colleagues, celebrated his work for his community, his town of Columbus, and the state as he has served in many capacities during his 48-year tenure. All have wished him great success for the future.

Lawmakers in the Senate passed [HB 911](#), our state's spending plan for the new fiscal year - the House and Senate will now hash out their differences over the next few days. We expect that will take some time as the Senate re-worked much of the proposed mental health spending previously proposed. A detailed review of relevant budget sections inside this [#GoldDomeReport](#).

The House also had a few poignant moments on the floor — Representative Randy Nix (R-LaGrange) went to the well so he could give his farewell to his colleagues. Representative Nix is Chairman of the Ethics Committee and will be missed. Meanwhile, the House remained unmasked as it sent the vaccine bill by Senator Jeff Mullis (R-Chickamauga) back to the Rules Committee for a little “work.” The House also referred [SB 82](#) back to the House Special Committee on Access to Quality Health Care. This is the prudent layperson standard legislation by Senator Michelle Au — it too will be revamped!

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IN DEPTH: Senate FY23 Budget

The Senate adopted its version of the FY23 State Budget on Friday, which will now head to a Conference Committee for compromise between the House and Senate. A detailed overview of several relevant agency sections is below:

		Governor's Proposal	House Proposal	Senate Proposal
Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities				
	<i>Increase funds to provide a \$5,000 cost of living adjustment for all full-time, benefit eligible state employees effective July 1, 2022 to address agency recruitment and retention needs. (Agency-Wide)</i>	\$77,026,026	\$79,267,026	\$79,267,026
	<i>Increase funds to allow eligible state employees to withdraw up to 40 hours of earned annual leave annually from their accrued leave balance. (Agency-Wide)</i>	\$1,832,346	\$1,832,346	\$1,832,346
	<i>Reflect a change in the Employees' Retirement System employer contribution rate to fully fund the actuarial determined employer contribution, provide for a cost of living adjustment for retirees, increase the employer 401(k) match for GSEPS employees, and fund the employer share of accrued forfeited leave for retiring employees. (Agency-Wide)</i>	\$10,040,901	\$10,040,901	\$10,040,901
Adult Addictive Disease Services				
	<i>Provide funds for a 10% increase for core services for addictive diseases</i>	\$1,667,223	\$1,667,223	\$1,667,223
	<i>SENATE: Increase funds to equip law enforcement, emergency medical services personnel, and probation staff with naloxone opioid overdose reversal medication.</i>			\$250,000
	<i>SENATE: Increase funds for Hope House to support addiction recovery services.</i>			\$50,000
Adult Development Disabilities Services				
	<i>Increase funds to annualize the cost of 100 New Options Waiver (NOW) and Comprehensive Supports Waiver Program (COMP) slots for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.</i>	\$1,960,937	\$1,960,937	\$1,960,937
	<i>Increase funds for 100 additional slots for the New Options Waiver (NOW) and Comprehensive Supports Waiver Program (COMP) for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.</i>			
	<i>HOUSE: Increase funds for 325 additional slots for NOW and COMP waiver programs.</i>			
	<i>SENATE: Increase funds for 513 additional slots.</i>	\$1,904,115	\$6,590,720	\$10,320,056
	<i>Increase funds for a 1% rate increase for intellectual and developmental disability providers with approval by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.</i>			
	<i>SENATE: Increase funds for rate increase for intellectual and developmental disability providers with approval by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services upon completion of a comprehensive provider rate study.</i>		\$2,450,000	\$0
	<i>Increase to provide a 5% increase to non-waiver family support.</i>		\$667,040	\$667,040
	<i>Provide funds to increase salaries for state psychiatric hospital nurses and health aides to address agency recruitment and retention.</i>		\$4,306,453	\$1,713,082
	<i>Utilize \$500,000 in 'American Rescue Plan Act of 2021' (ARPA) funds to provide for a developmental disabilities provider rate study.</i>		\$0	\$0
	<i>Recognize \$10,925,195 in extended temporary Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency to be utilized for services.</i>		\$0	\$0
Adult Forensic Services				
	<i>Increase funds for an additional 20-bed jail-based competency restoration program pilot.</i>	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000
	<i>Increase funds for an additional 15 forensic peer mentors to provide transition and re-entry support services.</i>		\$1,175,000	\$1,175,000
	<i>Provide funds to increase salaries for state psychiatric hospital nurses and health aides to address agency recruitment and retention</i>		\$9,324,200	\$2,911,734

Adult Mental Health Services				
	Increase funds for the Georgia Housing Voucher Program to support the requirements of the Department of Justice (DOJ) Settlement Agreement.	\$1,301,470	\$3,301,054	\$3,301,054
	Increase funds to convert an existing 16-bed crisis stabilization unit in Augusta to a 24-bed and 16 temporary observation chair behavioral health crisis center.	\$3,792,613	\$3,792,613	\$3,792,613
	Increase funds for the operational costs of 13 additional crisis stabilization unit beds at The Bradley Center of St. Francis Hospital. SENATE: Increase funds for the operational costs of 17 additional crisis stabilization unit beds at The Bradley Center of St. Francis Hospital.	\$2,383,911	\$2,383,911	\$3,117,423
	Provide funds for a 10% increase for core services for mental health.	\$6,139,090	\$6,139,090	\$6,139,090
	Provide funds to allow for Medicaid reimbursement of psychiatric and behavioral health care management services	\$1,154,101	\$1,154,101	\$1,154,101
	Increase funds for three additional Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) programs.	\$4,500,000	\$2,250,000	\$2,204,712
	Provide funds for a housing network manager to support the Georgia Housing Voucher program.		\$144,237	\$144,237
	Provide funds to establish a statewide Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) database.		\$696,700	\$0
	Provide funds to establish an Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) Oversight Unit within the department.		\$230,506	\$0
	Provide funds for co-responder mobile crisis team expansion to five new sites. SENATE: Increase funds for co-responder mobile crisis team expansion to ten new sites.		\$448,530	\$897,000
	Increase funds for a new 16-bed and 50 temporary observation chair behavioral health crisis center. SENATE: Utilize funds in Direct Care Support Services to bring 92 state hospital beds at Georgia Regional Hospital at Atlanta online by October 1, 2022 to reach full bed capacity.		\$9,710,570	\$0
	Provide for five additional community service board caseworkers for five new mental health accountability courts.		\$281,995	\$0
	Provide a 5% salary supplement for 12 employees who work directly with mental health accountability courts.		\$33,039	\$0
	Increase funds to establish a technical assistance coordination center for mental health accountability courts.		\$220,050	\$0
	Increase funds for additional Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL) support staff to manage the national '988' hotline expansion.		\$2,181,052	\$727,017
	Provide funds to increase salaries for state psychiatric hospital nurses and health aides to address agency recruitment and retention.		\$4,075,033	\$1,301,202
	Increase funds for the new 18-bed adult medical psychiatric unit at Grady Memorial Hospital.		\$6,300,000	\$2,000,000
	Provide one-time funds for a behavioral health provider rate study.		\$932,324	\$932,324
	Recognize \$2,335,605 in extended temporary Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency to be utilized for core mental health services.		\$0	\$0
	Increase funds to issue value-based payments to Community Service Boards based on specific quality metrics as determined by the Office of Health Strategy and Coordination.			\$18,000,000

Community Health		Governor's Proposal	House Proposal	Senate Proposal
	Increase funds to provide a \$5,000 cost of living adjustment for all full-time, benefit eligible state employees effective July 1, 2022 to address agency recruitment and retention needs. (Agency-Wide)	\$7,933,922	\$7,933,922	\$7,933,922
	Increase funds to allow eligible state employees to withdraw up to 40 hours of earned annual leave annually from their accrued leave balance. (Agency-Wide)	\$321,394	\$321,394	\$321,394
	Reflect a change in the Employees' Retirement System employer contribution rate to fully fund the actuarial determined employer contribution, provide for a cost of living adjustment for retirees, increase the employer 401(k) match for GSEPS employees, and fund the employer share of accrued forfeited leave for retiring employees. (Agency-Wide)	\$1,514,278	\$1,514,278	\$1,514,278
Departmental Administration				
	Provide funds to replace the Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS) with the Medicaid Enterprise System Transformation (MEST).		\$6,505,200	\$6,505,200
	Increase funds for the Enterprise Analytics Solution for Everyone (EASE) data warehouse.		\$424,535	\$424,535
	Provide funds for a study on reimbursement rates for mental health care providers.		\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
	The department shall begin preparation for a repository for tracking, analyzing, and reporting information resulting from complaints received by consumers and state health care entities regarding suspected mental health parity violations.		\$0	\$0
	Eliminate funds for a pilot to reduce Medicaid fraud.			(\$1,500,000)
Health Care Access and Improvement				
	Provide funds for two federally qualified health center behavioral health expansion start-up grants at Coastal Community Health Services and South Central Primary Care.		\$500,000	\$500,000
	Provide funds to expand mental health first aid training to address the need for front-line workers to identify, de-escalate, and refer persons in crisis.		\$74,000	\$74,000
	Provide funds to expand the RN-Reentry Program.		\$200,000	\$200,000
	Increase funds to expand housing capacity across the state for primary care residents completing rotations in rural areas.			\$100,000
	Eliminate funds for one-time funding for a charity clinic.			(\$125,000)
	Reduce funds for Rural Hospital Stabilization Grants in anticipation of the new hospital directed payment program.			(\$2,000,000)
Indigent Care Trust Fund				
	Increase funds to provide the state match for Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) payments for private deemed and non-deemed hospitals.	\$15,882,042	\$15,882,042	\$15,882,042

Medicaid - Aged, Blind, and Disabled				
	<i>Provide funds for the Medicaid reimbursement of clinical trials.</i>	\$2,412,359	\$2,412,359	\$2,412,359
	<i>Provide funds for a 10% reimbursement rate increase for long-term acute care hospitals (LTAC) and inpatient rehabilitation facilities (IRF).</i>		\$498,519	\$498,519
	<i>Reduce funds for skilled nursing centers to reflect 2020 cost reports.</i>		(\$6,180,737)	(\$6,180,737)
	<i>Provide funds for a 5% reimbursement rate increase for mechanical ventilators.</i>		\$424,165	\$0
	<i>Provide funds to increase the reimbursement rate for home and community-based service providers to offset the cost of fingerprint requirements.</i>		\$1,994,623	\$1,994,623
	<i>Provide funds to increase reimbursement rates for medical nutrition therapy.</i>		\$10,600	\$10,600
	<i>Provide funds for a 10% increase in two dental extraction codes and a 7% increase for 17 select dental restorative codes.</i>		\$179,240	\$179,240
	<i>Recognize appropriations for current Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services application that provides a 10% rate increase for home and community-based service providers, including the Georgia Pediatric Program.</i>			\$0
	<i>Eliminate funds for a one-time hold harmless.</i>			(\$8,000,000)
Medicaid - Low-Income Medicaid				
	<i>Increase funds for the implementation of express lane enrollment pursuant to the passage of HB 163 (2021 Session).</i>	\$39,466,982	\$39,466,982	\$39,466,982
	<i>Provide funds to eliminate attestation and reimburse all providers at enhanced rates for all 108 procedure codes.</i>	\$85,403,385	\$85,403,385	\$85,403,385
	<i>Increase funds to provide one year of postpartum coverage effective upon Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services approval.</i>	\$28,184,166	\$28,184,166	\$28,184,166
	<i>Provide funds for the Medicaid reimbursement of therapeutic services.</i>	\$11,258,121	\$11,258,121	\$10,671,871
	<i>Provide funds for the Medicaid reimbursement of psychiatric and behavioral health care management services.</i>	\$1,597,736	\$1,597,736	\$1,597,736
	<i>Provide funds for the Medicaid reimbursement of clinical trials.</i>	\$8,301	\$8,301	\$8,301
	<i>Provide funds for the Medicaid reimbursement of donor milk.</i>	\$469,138	\$469,138	\$469,138
	<i>Provide funds and direct the department to submit an 1115 waiver to provide Medicaid benefits to individuals with HIV.</i>		\$4,505,542	\$4,505,542
	<i>Provide funds to increase reimbursement rates for medical nutrition therapy.</i>		\$259,151	\$259,151
	<i>Provide funds for a 10% increase in two dental extraction codes and a 7% increase for 17 select dental restorative codes.</i>		\$498,059	\$498,059
	<i>Provide funds and direct the department to submit an 1115 waiver to remove the five-year waiting period for lawful permanent residents.</i>		\$1,247,785	\$1,247,785
	<i>Provide funds to increase select OB/GYN codes to 2020 Medicare reimbursement levels.</i>		\$825,212	\$825,212
	<i>Provide funds for value-based purchasing.</i>		\$5,785,134	\$46,281,072
	<i>Increase funds for a pilot program to use assistive technology to support people with chronic diseases.</i>			\$487,500
	<i>Increase funds for a dispensing fee for medications dispensed at independent pharmacies for recipients enrolled in a Medicaid managed care plan.</i>			\$1,000,000

Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce: Board Administration				
	<i>Provide funds to implement a Behavioral Health Care Workforce Database.</i>		\$400,000	\$400,000
Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce: Graduate Medical Education				
	<i>Increase funds for 136 new residency slots in primary care medicine.</i>			
	<i>HOUSE: Increase to 1999 new slots.</i>	\$2,534,985	\$3,989,193	\$3,989,193
	<i>Provide funds for a pilot program to perform echocardiograms of pregnant and postpartum women to address maternal mortality.</i>			
	<i>HOUSE: Fund through Department of Public Health.</i>	\$600,000	\$0	\$0
	<i>Provide funds to support a new residency program at Archbold Medical Center.</i>		\$350,000	\$150,000
	<i>Provide funds for fellowship positions at Augusta University for gynecologic oncology, public health-focused medicine, and rural primary care.</i>		\$375,000	\$250,000
	<i>Provide one-time funds for a statewide dental workforce assessment to evaluate current and future needs.</i>		\$35,000	\$35,000
	<i>Utilize existing funds (\$150,000) and provide funds for Southern Regional Medical Center for continued planning and start-up of a new residency program.</i>		\$50,000	\$0
	<i>Utilize existing funds (\$150,000) and provide funds for Southeast Georgia Health Systems for continued planning and start-up of a new residency program.</i>		\$50,000	\$0
	<i>Provide capitation funds for seven residency slots at Emory University.</i>		\$109,323	\$109,323
	<i>Increase funds for Memorial Health Meadows Hospital for planning and start-up of a new residency fellowship program.</i>			\$150,000
	<i>Increase funds for Coffee Regional Hospital for planning and start-up of a new residency program.</i>			\$150,000
Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce: Mercer School of Medicine Grant				
	<i>Increase funds for the third year of the seven-year plan for Mercer School of Medicine's medical school campus in Columbus.</i>	\$1,073,231	\$1,073,231	\$1,073,231
	<i>Utilize existing funds (\$500,000) and provide funds to expand the accelerated track program to include forensic pathology.</i>			
	<i>SENATE: Eliminate funds for the accelerated track program for forensic pathology start-up.</i>		\$15,587	(\$15,587)
Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce: Morehouse School of Medicine Grant				
	<i>Provide funds for the start-up and operating support for the new nursing program at Morehouse School of Medicine.</i>		\$2,000,000	\$0
	<i>Provide funds to support child and adolescent psychology and psychiatric residency programs.</i>		\$376,000	\$376,000
Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce: Physicians for Rural Areas				
	<i>Provide funds for additional loan repayment grants for physicians, physician assistants, and advanced practice registered nurses.</i>		\$385,000	\$155,000
Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce: Undergraduate Medical Education				
	<i>Provide funds for the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine South Georgia campus to support growth</i>		\$375,000	\$375,000
	<i>Increase funds for one-time funding for equipment and operating grants for nursing programs with wait lists and additional student capacity.</i>			\$5,000,000

Education		Governor's Proposal	House Proposal	Senate Proposal
	Increase funds to provide a \$5,000 cost of living adjustment for all full-time, benefit eligible state employees effective July 1, 2022 to address agency recruitment and retention needs. (Agency-Wide)	\$3,520,540	\$4,193,964	\$4,193,964
	Increase funds to allow eligible state employees to withdraw up to 40 hours of earned annual leave annually from their accrued leave balance. (Agency-Wide)	\$672,328	\$672,328	\$672,328
	Reflect a change in the Employees' Retirement System employer contribution rate to fully fund the actuarial determined employer contribution, provide for a cost of living adjustment for retirees, increase the employer 401(k) match for GSEPS employees, and fund the employer share of accrued forfeited leave for retiring employees. (Agency-Wide)	\$1,522,210	\$1,522,210	\$1,522,210
Agricultural Education				
	Increase funds to offset the austerity reduction for the Area Teacher Program, Extended Day/Year, Young Farmers, and Youth Camps.	\$253,606	\$253,606	\$253,606
	Provide funds to increase salaries for certified teachers and employees by \$2,000 effective September 1, 2022, for a total adjustment to the state base salary schedule of \$5,000 since FY 2020.	\$300,007	\$469,033	\$469,033
	Increase funds for 21 new extended day/year programs		\$178,500	\$178,500
	Transfer five certified personnel positions to the state teacher salary schedule.		\$55,734	\$0
	Provide funds for an urban/suburban agriculture specialist		\$144,000	\$0
	Provide funds for a Young Farmer program in Floyd County, and additional funds to the Young Farmer programs in Banks County, Barrow County, and Pelham City		\$100,000	\$0
	Provide funds for an additional Georgia FFA Association staff member and two agricultural education support staff.			
	SENATE: Increase funds for grants to the Georgia FFA Association.		\$140,000	\$100,000
	Increase funds for a greenhouse in Calhoun County.			\$90,000
Non Quality Basic Education Formula Grants				
	Increase formula funds for Residential Treatment Facilities based on attendance.	\$919,406	\$931,194	\$931,194
	Increase funds to adjust the state base salary schedule to increase salaries for certified teachers and certified employees by \$2,000 effective September 1, 2022, for Residential Treatment Facilities.	\$268,285	\$268,285	\$268,285
	Increase funds for feminine hygiene grants to include the fifth grade.			
	SENATE: Utilize existing funds to increase funds for feminine hygiene grants to include the fifth grade.		\$200,000	\$0
	Reduce funds to reflect the closure of a residential treatment facility.		(\$460,797)	(\$460,797)
	Reduce funds to reflect an update to licensed capacity at a residential treatment facility.			(\$89,635)

Nutrition				
	<i>Increase funds for a 5.4% salary increase.</i>	\$1,816,267	\$1,104,239	\$1,104,239
	<i>Increase funds for school nutrition.</i>		\$712,028	\$712,028
Preschool Disabilities Services				
	<i>Increase funds to adjust the state base salary schedule to increase salaries for certified teachers and certified employees by \$2,000 effective September 1, 2022.</i>	\$908,226	\$918,985	\$918,985
	<i>Increase funds to offset the austerity reduction for grants.</i>	\$1,682,204	\$1,682,204	\$1,682,204
Pupil Transportation				
	<i>Increase funds for a 5.4% salary increase.</i>	\$4,412,227	\$4,749,581	\$4,749,581
Quality Basic Education Program				
	<i>Increase funds to adjust the state base salary schedule to increase salaries for certified teachers and certified employees by \$2,000 effective September 1, 2022.</i>	\$287,136,600	\$287,135,340	\$287,135,340
	<i>Increase funds to offset the austerity reduction for K-12 education.</i>	\$382,696,501	\$382,696,501	\$382,696,501
Regional Education Service Agencies				
	<i>Increase funds to offset the austerity reduction for grants to RESAs.</i>	\$593,006	\$433,006	\$433,006
	<i>Restore funds for mental health contractual services.</i>		\$160,000	\$160,000
Technology/Career Education				
	<i>Increase funds to offset the austerity reduction for Extended Day/Year, Vocational Supervisors, Industry Certification, and Youth Apprenticeship programs.</i>	\$282,460	\$282,460	\$282,460
BONDS				
	<i>Capital Outlay Program - Low Wealth for local school construction, statewide.</i>	\$46,095,000	\$45,805,000	\$45,805,000
	<i>Capital Outlay Program - Additional Low Wealth for local school construction, statewide.</i>	\$42,305,000	\$42,305,000	\$42,305,000
	<i>Capital Outlay Program - Regular for local school construction, statewide.</i>	\$197,545,000	\$196,820,000	\$196,820,000
	<i>Capital Outlay Program - Regular Advance for local school construction, statewide.</i>	\$2,765,000	\$2,765,000	\$2,765,000
	<i>Purchase career, technical, and agricultural education equipment, statewide.</i>	\$2,270,000	\$5,230,000	\$5,230,000
	<i>Construction and improvements to FFA/FCCLA Center and Camp John Hope, Covington, Newton County.</i>			
	<i>HOUSE: Provide \$4,000,000 in 20-year bonds to construct the Agriculture Mechanics and Agriscience Education Facility and for improvements to Walters Hall at the Camp John Hope FFA/FCCLA Center, Fort Valley, Macon County.</i>	\$515,000	\$4,000,000	

Human Services		Governor's Proposal	House Proposal	Senate Proposal
	Increase funds to provide a \$5,000 cost of living adjustment for all full-time, benefit eligible state employees effective July 1, 2022 to address agency recruitment and retention needs. (Agency-Wide)	\$37,559,190	\$37,559,190	\$37,559,190
	Increase funds to allow eligible state employees to withdraw up to 40 hours of earned annual leave annually from their accrued leave balance. (Agency-Wide)	\$1,429,828	\$1,429,828	\$1,429,828
	Reflect a change in the Employees' Retirement System employer contribution rate to fully fund the actuarial determined employer contribution, provide for a cost of living adjustment for retirees, increase the employer 401(k) match for GSEPS employees, and fund the employer share of accrued forfeited leave for retiring employees. (Agency-Wide)	\$12,640,358	\$12,640,358	\$12,640,358
Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention				
	Provide funds for services to at-risk girls.		\$200,000	\$250,000
Child Welfare Services				
	Provide funds for a community action team pilot program to address children who are in, or are at risk of entering, foster care.	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
	Provide funds for an autism recognition pilot program in Region 12.	\$451,978	\$451,978	\$451,978
	Provide funds for autism respite care.	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
	Increase funds to the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) to enhance statewide capacity.		\$200,000	\$400,000
	Increase funds for contracts for vocational training services.			\$100,000
Out of Home Care				
	Provide funds for a 10% provider rate increase for Child Caring Institutions, Child Placing Agencies, foster parents, and relative caregivers. (Total Funds: \$31,487,817)	\$27,810,584	\$27,810,584	\$27,810,585
	Utilize \$6,700,000 in existing funds to improve the continuum of care including preventative and therapeutic services, in addition to addressing youth with complex needs.	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Provide funds to increase the annual foster care clothing allowance by \$275 per child.		\$3,025,000	\$3,025,001
Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency: Vocational Rehabilitation Program				
	Provide funds for capital maintenance and repairs	\$4,310,000	\$0	\$2,155,000
	Restore funds for independent living services.		\$200,000	\$160,000
	Provide funds to operate the Georgia Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing.		\$20,000	\$20,000
	Provide funds to support the opening of priority service categories.		\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
	Restore funds for Georgia Radio Reading Service.		\$54,000	\$54,000
	Increase funds for Friends of Disabled Adults and Children (FODAC) to expand support services.			\$100,000

Juvenile Justice		Governor's Proposal	House Proposal	Senate Proposal
	Increase funds to provide a \$5,000 cost of living adjustment for all full-time, benefit eligible state employees effective July 1, 2022 to address agency recruitment and retention needs. (Agency-Wide)	\$19,589,607	\$19,589,607	\$19,589,607
	Increase funds to allow eligible state employees to withdraw up to 40 hours of earned annual leave annually from their accrued leave balance. (Agency-Wide)	\$1,544,574	\$1,544,574	\$1,544,574
	Reflect a change in the Employees' Retirement System employer contribution rate to fully fund the actuarial determined employer contribution, provide for a cost of living adjustment for retirees, increase the employer 401(k) match for GSEPS employees, and fund the employer share of accrued forfeited leave for retiring employees. (Agency-Wide)	\$7,478,915	\$7,478,915	\$7,478,915
Community Service				
	Increase funds to reflect the loss of Title IV-E funds associated with the October 1, 2021 implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act and the statewide transition to increased family-based placement settings.	\$701,307	\$701,307	
	Increase funds for Room, Board, and Watchful Oversight to reflect the loss of Title IV-E federal funds.	\$3,375,088	\$3,375,088	
	Increase funds for a 10% provider rate increase to Child Caring Institutions.			\$2,314,528

Floor Action

The House took up the following measures on Legislative Day 35:

- [SB 226](#) - Sale or Distribution of Harmful Materials to Minors; provisions of Code Section 16-12-103 shall be applicable to libraries operated by schools; provide - PASSED (97-61)
- [SB 345](#) - State Government; state and local governments from mandating vaccine passports; prohibit - RECOMMITTED TO RULES
- [SB 470](#) - Mortgage Lenders and Brokers; different categories of felony convictions for purposes of investigations of mortgage loan originator applicants; provide - PASSED (142-1)
- [SB 500](#) - Commerce; a litigation bar on governmental entities regarding certain statewide opioid litigation; provide - PASSED (133-0)
- [SB 514](#) - "Unmask Georgia Students Act"; enact - PASSED (93-52)
- [SB 543](#) - Wrongful Death; a parent who is determined to be responsible for the homicide of his or her child shall have no right of recovery against the value of the child's life; provide - PASSED (156-0)
- [SB 581](#) - Property Boundary Lines; plane coordinates for defining and stating geographic position within this state as the Georgia State Plane Coordinate System; designate - PASSED (142-0)

The Senate took up the following measures on Legislative Day 35:

- [HB 911](#) - General appropriations; State Fiscal Year July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023 - PASSED (56-0)
- [HB 1064](#) - Income tax; certain retirement income for military service; provide exemption - PASSED (56-0)
- [HB 1089](#) - Revenue and taxation; certain violations of registration requirements for motor vehicles operated by motor carriers; increase penalty - PASSED (48-0)
- [HB 1188](#) - Criminal procedure; each act of child molestation charged as a separate offense; provide - TABLED
- [HB 1349](#) - Natural Resources, Dept. of; attempt to prevent net loss of land acreage available for hunting on state owned lands; extend date - PASSED (52-0)
- [HB 1372](#) - Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act; revise provisions and short title - PASSED (50-0)
- [SR 542](#) - Women Veterans Day; recognizing the first Tuesday in March of every year - PASSED (55-0)

Committee Reports

Senate Government Oversight Committee

Chairman Marty Harbin (R-Tyrone) and his Committee took up two bills after acknowledging their Chick-Fil-A breakfast from the Georgia Chamber of Commerce on Thursday:

- [HB 1520](#), authored by Representative Lee Hawkins (R-Gainesville), creates in Chapter 37 of Title 31 a Council on Addressing Healthcare Workforce Challenges. This Council idea emerged from the Georgia Hospital Association due to its member hospitals' struggle with staffing. Representative Hawkins noted that this Council would be a follow up from a 2007 study, focusing at that point on physician shortages which the General Assembly has since made strides in addressing. Representative Hawkins noted that Stephens County closed its OB unit as it had no nurses. Hospitals have seen 300-400% increases in staffing costs. The Council would be composed of 27 members — and it includes members from the state's education community to help drive students towards these professions. Representative Hawkins noted that it was intentional to add K-12 education representation on the Council because of the dual programs offered in the state. Senator Billy Hickman (R-Statesboro) noted that healthcare workers, teachers, and public safety workers often do their jobs as they love their work — so the state needs to find those individuals and add credibility to their jobs. Further, he noted his concern about the payer mix for facilities. Hawkins stated that expanding Medicaid had been proposed, but the state does not have the providers to provide the care, and the federal government needs to pay more in the Medicaid programs. Senator Hickman stated that the closure of a hospital does not help a community, and they do not re-open. Senator Blake Tillery (R-Vidalia) agreed that there is a problem — his issue was the size of the council, but he did like the sunset of the Council on June 30, 2025. A number of groups presented support:
 - Tanner Health System — noting in particular that it was paying \$160 for traveling nurses and that there was a lack of slots in nursing schools.
 - Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals — supporting that COVID had only exacerbated the problem of staffing.
 - Georgia Hospital Association — stating that this proposal is broader than what might be overseen by the Board of Healthcare Workforce and that workforce was the number one legislative priority for the Association.
 - Northeast Georgia Health System — indicating its hospitals had 500 vacancies and had spent \$80 million in staffing costs since Oct. 1, 2021.
 - Atrium Health — stating it had 19% vacancies in its Rome/Floyd facilities and 26 percent vacancies in Macon. It has also taken on a number of factors to help mitigate its staffing issues — including three pay raises during the pandemic and establishing a minimum wage of \$12.50 per hour and setting up a daycare for its workers' children. Atrium's contracted workers have been \$65-\$165 per hour. Atrium also mentioned that it had significant bed closures (Macon is a 637 bed facility but had 60 beds closed on average).

The Committee gave this legislation a DO PASS recommendation to the Substitute presented, and it moves to the Senate Rules Committee.

- [HB 1355](#), authored by Representative Calvin Smyre (D-Columbus), amends Chapter 4 of Title 1 in order to declare the week where September 11 falls annually as Public Safety Week in Georgia. Governor Kemp had asked that Representative Smyre also includes in his legislation the addition of an additional state holiday, “Juneteenth.” This would increase the number of state holidays, following the federal holidays, from 12 to 13 days. The last holiday added was the observance of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday in 1984. A number of questions were raised by the Committee, including whether there was a fiscal note on the legislation and what cost the legislation would have on the state. It was mentioned that it costs the state approximately \$130 million for each closure. Senator Greg Dolezal (R-Cumming) made the motion to table the legislation due to his reservations. The motion carried with a vote of 4-3.

Senate Regulated Industries and Public Utilities

Chairman Bill Cowser (R-Athens) and the Regulated Industries Committee met on Thursday and took up these bills:

- [HB 476](#), authored by Representative Dale Washburn (R-Macon), amends Chapter 15 of Title 43 to provide that the Georgia Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors Board is an independent state agency attached to the Secretary of State for administrative purposes only. This legislation went through the Georgia Occupational Regulation Review Council process and received clearance during the Session (this legislation was initially proposed in 2021). Support for this “transfer” was provided by ACCGA and the Surveying and Mapping Society of Georgia; licensed engineers and surveyors will bear the costs. The Committee gave this legislation a DO PASS recommendation; it moves to the Senate Rules Committee.
- [HB 972](#), authored by Representative Dave Belton (R-Buckhead), addresses the licensed professional counselor law in Chapter 10A of Title 43. This legislation went through a number of changes; the more recent changes were to prevent the legislation from being required to be reviewed by the Georgia Occupational Regulation Review Council. Attorney Aubrey Villines outlined the changes for the Committee, noting, in particular, the 48 hours versus 60 hours of training; the two-year supervision requirement; and changes for the counselors to be compliant with the Interstate Compact. The Committee also gave this legislation a DO PASS recommendation; it also moves to the Senate Rules Committee.
- [HB 1424](#), authored by Representative Alan Powell (R-Hartwell), got the greatest amount of attention by the Committee in its “hearing only.” The changes to be incorporated into Chapters 13 and 27 of Title 50 and are to provide administrative procedures and actions regarding bona fide coin operated amusement machines shall be subject to Chapter 13 of Title 50; to provide a definition; to provide for a limitation on the permitted non cash redemption award for Class A machines; to provide for redemption for successful play of bona fide coin operated amusement machines by automated kiosks under certain conditions. Representative Powell indicated that the changes will allow the COAM machines to provide for a prize of \$50 rather than \$5 and would allow the prize to be given in the form of a gift card

- this is to eliminate the use of cash for the prizes. It also addresses a current criteria of the 50 percent rules for fraternal organizations. The Committee had numerous questions; the Chairman also presented a slide deck on revenues and returns for the coin operated amusement machines. Several on the Committee questioned whether these were “gambling” operations and there was a reference as to whether a constitutional amendment was needed to get around the gambling question. The Georgia Baptist Mission Board opposed the legislation stating that you “can’t compete with corruption.” An attorney for Buckees supported the legislation as it would be beneficial to the state to make the changes due to the revenue brought in. The Georgia Convenience Store Association also spoke in favor of the legislation and proposed use of gift cards. No vote was taken at the hearing.

Senate Finance Committee

Chairman Chuck Hufstetler (R-Rome) and the Senate Finance Committee met on Thursday and had a full agenda. Among those which the Committee addressed were these:

- [HB 302](#), authored by Representative Martin Momtahan (R-Dallas), amends O.C.G.A. 48-13-9 in the underlying legislation to require that the proceeds of local government regulatory fees be used to pay for regulatory activity and not general operations; to revise the list of professions which may be subject to such regulatory fees (it removes taxis, shooting galleries and firearm ranges, firearm dealers, and boxing promoters). A new Substitute on the proposal, LC 28 0515S, passed with one Senator opposed to the legislation. The Georgia Municipal Association appreciated the changes (noting specifically the reporting issues) but opposed the legislation. The legislation received a DO PASS recommendation, and Senator John Albers (R-Roswell) will carry the legislation in the Senate.
- [HB 934](#), authored by Representative Rob Leverett (R-Elberton), amends O.C.G.A. 48-8-262 to provide for the maximum amount and time frame for the collection of such tax when an intergovernmental agreement has been entered into between a county and municipality. A friendly amendment was made to the legislation and received a DO PASS recommendation. Senator Jason Anavitarte (R-Dallas) will carry the legislation in the Senate.
- [HB 1041](#), authored by Representative Clay Pirkle (R-Ashburn), amends O.C.G.A. 48-7-29.20, the Rural Hospital Tax Credit program. Under the current law, the credits are capped at \$60 million per taxable year. This legislation moves the cap to \$75 million for individuals who donate to a qualified hospital. It was stated that the administration fee of the credits is capped at 3 percent. The credits are used up rather quickly in the year by taxpayers. Last year the credit was expended by September. The Committee gave this legislation a DO PASS recommendation. Senator Billy Hickman (R-Statesboro) will carry the legislation in the Senate.

House State Planning and Affairs Committee

Chairman Karen Mathiak (R-Griffin) and the State Planning and Affairs Committee had one bill which they heard and addressed on Thursday. [SB 108](#), authored by Senator Gail Davenport (D-Jonesboro), adds in Chapter 2 of Title 30 so as to create the Commission on the Blind and Visually Impaired. The Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency now oversees the services for the blind and visually impaired. Georgia has approximately 200,000 blind and visually impaired individuals. GVRA,

according to testimony by speakers, does not have appropriate staffing who understand the needs of the population, nor does it offer the appropriate services for these Georgians. For instance, it was explained that the GVRA contracts out for Braille services as it does not have individuals on staff to assist clients. Senator Davenport, who explained that a group had sought this new Commission for 10 years, indicated that the funds for the services would follow the new Commission once created. GVRA stated that the funds for the blind and visually impaired were approximately 25% of its budget. The Committee had a number of questions about funding and the focus on services. 28 other states have commissions for these blind and visually impaired individuals - many times, they are deaf and blind which require other needs. The motion was made to DO PASS, but several committee members attended the meeting via virtual means; one member was having audio difficulties and wished to cast her vote in the "chat." That brought on a litany of questions; however, the audio issue was resolved, and she was able to cast a vote. The legislation passed 8-7 and now moves to the House Rules Committee.

House Health and Human Services Committee

The House Health and Human Services Committee, chaired by Representative Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta), met to consider the following measures on Thursday:

- [SB 573](#), authored by Senator Matt Brass (R-Newnan), amends Chapter 7 of Title 31 of the OCGA. The bill defines surgical smoke as the gaseous by-product produced by surgical tools or heat-producing equipment used for dissection and hemostasis during surgical or invasive procedures. The measure would require hospital and ambulatory surgery centers to adopt policies to reduce exposure to surgical smoke.

Senator Brass presented the bill to the Committee, explaining that this version of the legislation eliminates the reference to "point of origin" to give hospitals more flexibility in implementing smoke evaluation systems. Representative Lee Hawkins (R-Gainesville) asked the author to confirm that the bill does not restrict smoking in the operating room, to which Senator Brass explains that it does not, but said caution should be exercised when ashing.

The Committee recommended the bill DO PASS and be sent to the Rules Committee. Representative Mark Newton (R-Augusta) will carry the bill in the House.

- [SB 496](#), authored by Senator Dean Burke (R-Bainbridge), amends Chapter 16 of Title 45 to require a medical examiner's inquiry when death occurs of a pregnant woman or woman who was pregnant within 365 days of her death. It also adds that an individual shall be deemed to have died unattended by a physician when any such individual has not been seen or treated by a physician within the 180 days prior to such individual's death for a condition or illness likely to have caused or contributed to such individual's death.

Senator Burke presented the bill to the Committee, which was previously passed out of the Committee, but the wrong substitute was advanced. The correct substitute, with minor wording adjustments, as presented, and the Committee recommended the bill DO PASS and be sent to the Rules Committee.

The Committee also heard a presentation from Dr. Suresh Ramalingam, Director of the Winship Cancer Institute, on the role of biomarkers in improving cancer outcomes. Biomarker testing of tumor tissue or blood can dramatically impact how physicians can target therapy to individual patients and cancer cases. Dr. Ramalingam discussed Winship's role in this

approach to diagnosis and treatment and its partnership with Georgia universities, the Georgia Center for Oncology Research and Education, and the Georgia Association of Clinical Oncology.

Senate Judiciary Committee

The Senate Judiciary Committee, chaired by Senator Brian Strickland (R-Marietta), met on Thursday afternoon to hear the following measures:

- [HB 478](#), authored by Representative Bonnie Rich (R-Sugar Hill), amends Title 24 to include all types of proceedings in the state's expert witness requirements. Specifically, the bill requires that the current reliability standard for expert testimony in civil cases be extended to criminal cases.

Representative Rich presented the bill to the Committee, which she noted had wide support. The Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and Prosecuting Attorneys Council appeared in support of the legislation, as did the Southern Center for Human Rights. The Committee recommended the bill DO PASS and be sent to the Rules Committee. Chairman Strickland will carry the bill in the Senate.

- [HB 752](#), authored by Representative Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta), amends multiple Titles to provide for a psychiatric advance directive that allows a competent adult to express his or her mental health care treatment preferences and desires directly through instructions written in advance and indirectly through appointing an agent to make mental health care decisions on behalf of that person. Such a directive would trump a standard advanced directive and health agent.

Representative Cooper presented the bill to the Committee as a Substitute (LC 33 9134S). Senator Ben Watson (R-Savannah) expressed concern about what would happen if an individual's mental health care preferences were not achievable under a directive, to which Representative Cooper's subject matter expert explained that a mental health care agent or health institution can deviate from the directive where the preferences are contraindicated, unavailable, inappropriate in the emergent situation. Senator Blake Tillery (R-Vidalia) also clarified that the failure of a provider or agent to abide by a directive does not create liability for the provider or agent. Both of the physicians on the Committee, Senators Watson and Kay Kirkpatrick (R-Marietta), expressed support for the legislation. The Committee recommended the bill DO PASS by Committee Substitute and be sent to the Rules Committee. Senator John F. Kennedy (R-Macon) will carry the bill in the Senate.

- [HB 1092](#), authored by Representative Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta), is the Georgia Women's CARE (Child Care Alternatives, Resources, and Education) Act. The bill amends Titles 17 and 42 to address issues around the arrest and detention of pregnant and postpartum females. Specifically, the legislation allows a judge to defer the sentence of a pregnant woman until six weeks post-delivery. It requires participants to participate in perinatal health care, treatment, and assessments, as well as education and resource programs. The bill also requires monthly check-ins with the sentencing judge.

Representative Cooper presented the bill to the Committee as a Substitute (LC 33 9122S). The Prosecuting Attorneys Council expressed some operational concerns with the legislation

(including informed consent and the conditions relating to perinatal care) but voiced overall support for the spirit of the legislation. The Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers also expressed some due process concerns. Representative Cooper stated this was the first time anyone had expressed concerns about the legislation. Legislative Counsel proposed adding an opportunity for hearing when an individual faces revocation after violating the conditions relating to perinatal care to address the due process concerns. Representatives of RestoreHer spoke in support of the legislation. Chairman Strickland held the bill pending further conversations between the author and PAC, and GACDL to ensure due process issues are resolved.

- [HB 1234](#), authored by Representative Mandi Ballinger (R-Canton), proposes to amend O.C.G.A. 15-11-3(b) to require that a court appoint an attorney to a dependent child and any child receiving extended youth care services through the Division of Family and Children Services.

Representative Ballinger presented the bill to the Committee, and the Department of Human Services appeared in support of the legislation. Carson Cook of the Barton Child Law and Policy Center also expressed support for the legislation. The Committee recommended the bill DO PASS and be sent to the Rules Committee. Senator Bo Hatchett (R-Cornelia) will carry the bill in the Senate.

- [HB 1275](#), authored by Representative Bonnie Rich (R-Sugar Hill), amends Title 36 to revise provisions related to the appointment and removal of municipal court judges.

Representative Rich presented the bill to the Committee, which recommended the bill DO PASS and be sent to the Rules Committee. The bill will be carried by Senator John F. Kennedy (R-Macon) in the Senate.

- [HB 1348](#), authored by Representative Bonnie Rich (R-Sugar Hill), amends the Georgia Smoke-Free Air Act across several titles to provide that vaping be treated the same as smoking for purposes of the Act's prohibitions.

Representative Rich presented the bill to the Committee as a Substitute (LC 54 0088S). The Substitute revises the definition of vaping at lines 50-53 to include reference to inhalation of vapors and aerosols containing nicotine. The legislation is being proposed by the Department of Public Health. Voices for Georgia's Children and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta spoke in support of the legislation. The Committee recommended the bill DO PASS by Committee Substitute and be sent to the Rules Committee. Senator Jeff Mullis (R-Chickamauga) will carry the bill in the Senate.

- [HB 1358](#), authored by Representative Mandi Ballinger (R-Canton), is the Chairman John Meadows Act. The bill amends Title 12 to revise provisions of law regarding the use or possession of any handgun in a park, historic site, or recreational area.

Chairman Strickland presented a Substitute to HB 1358 that replaces the content of the underlying bill with the content of [SB 319](#), Senator Jason Anavitate's (R-Dallas) "Georgia Constitutional Carry Act of 2021". The Substitute bill, however, retains the title of the "Chairman John Meadows Act." The Committee heard no testimony on the bill because the content of SB 319 has already had a full hearing before the Committee. The Committee recommended the bill DO PASS by Committee Substitute and be sent to the Rules

Committee.

- [HB 1216](#), authored by Representative Lauren McDonald (R-McDonald), amends Title 40 Chapter 6 to increase the penalties and fines for individuals convicted of overtaking a school bus, driving on the sidewalk, laying drag, reckless driving, and reckless stunt driving. Representative McDonald also adds “blue light” to the list of measures someone could use to impersonate a law enforcement official, thus making it illegal.

A representative from the Prosecuting Attorneys Council voiced their support. While

Jill Travis from the Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers expressed concern.

Senator Blake Tillery (R-Vidalia) motioned to add the line, “An individual who immediately reduces below the posted speed limit, turns on their flashers, and drives to a lighted area shall not be deemed to attempt to allude or flee a pursuing police vehicle” passed. The bill as amended received a DO PASS recommendation. Senator Bo Hatchett will carry the measure in the Senate.

- [HB 554](#), authored by Representative Stan Gunter (R-Blairsville), amends Title 44 regarding lis pendens. The bill creates an avenue for a property owner for an individual to file an objection for an improperly filed lis pendens to be properly filed. The authors suggested an amendment that would include provisions for a discretionary appeal. LC 44 2094S as amended received a DO PASS recommendation. Senator Bo Hatchett will carry the measure in the Senate.
- [HB 1](#), authored by Representative Josh Bonner, creates the Forming Open and Robust University Minds (FORUM) Act in Title 20, which aims to protect free speech on college campuses.

Senator Elena Parent (D-Atlanta) asked how this bill would protect protests and counter-protesters. Representative Bonner noted the legislation did not prevent either type of protest.

[HB 371](#) was scheduled for hearing but was removed from the agenda.

Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee

Thursday morning, Chairman Larry Walker (R-Perry) convened the Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee to order to discuss the following measures:

- [HB 1175](#), authored by Representative Clay Pirkle (R-Ashburn), amends Chapter 2 of Title 26 of the O.C.G.A. The measure would allow milk producers to sell raw milk direct to consumers. The substitute (LC 51 0187S) adds labeling language to warn consumers of potential illness if consumed and alters the start date to 2023. The measure includes testing and animal welfare requirements.

Senator Tyler Harper (R-Ocilla) asked if the author intended to allow providers to sell to consumers direct from their operations, not to act as a distributor to retailer. Representative Pirkle agreed that was his intent. Senator Harper continued on a line of questions relating to standards. He further asked what the cost would be to state and if it had been appropriated,

to which Representative Pirkle noted the department had an estimate, and he was not sure of a line in the budgets. Senator Harper asked if the author was amenable to moving the effective date six months to give more consideration to the cost and provide the proper rules and regulations. Representative Pirkle was not amenable to changing the date.

Senator Lee Anderson (R-Grovetown) asked if a dairyman could deliver the product. Representative Pirkle noted the bill did not have any delivery requirements.

Senator Kim Jackson (D-Stone Mountain) thanked the author for the label but noted the new label is less of a warning than pets milk. Representative Pirkle added that pets' milk is not tested and was not amenable to changing the label. Senator Jackson pointed out that not every bottle is tested, allowing the same risk as a consumer drinking pets milk.

Senator Russ Goodman expressed concern that a neighbor could not provide milk to another neighbor. A member of Legislative Counsel offered a few changes to correct this. Chairman Walker disapproved of amending it without printed language.

Senator Lee Anderson provided the subcommittee report. The bill was tabled and did not move out of committee.

- [HB 1443](#), authored by Representative Houston Gaines (R-Athens), amends Article 13 of Chapter 2 of Title 26 of the O.C.G.A., which would add mobile food service establishments to code. Currently, food trucks are required to receive permits in every county they visit. The bill allows food trucks to apply for permits in their home county which can travel with them. The measure authorizes the second county, where the vendor is traveling to, the ability to complete surprise inspections.

Senator Kim Jackson motioned for the bill to DO PASS. LC 54 0075S travels to the Senate Rules Committee with Senator John Albers (R-Roswell) carrying it.

- [HB 1384](#), by Representative David Jenkins (R-Grantville), amends Code Section 8-2-23 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated to allow for uninhabited, out-buildings to be built with ungraded lumber. Representative Dominic LaRiccia (R-Douglas) presented the measure for Representative Jenkins. A committee substitute was presented. The bill passed by the House could only operate in counties with zoning boards, and the substitute changes this so all counties will be able to participate. It further includes clarified language for structures that could have habitable space.

Representative Kim Jackson (D-Stone Mountain) asked a neighbor could sell or give ungraded lumber to their neighbor. Representative LaRiccia said yes, the Senator could.

The measure received a DO PASS recommendation with one in opposition. Senator Lee Anderson will carry the bill in the Senate.

Chairman Larry Walker motioned for Russ Moon's re-appointment to the Commodity Commission.

Chairman Tyler Paul Smith (R-Bremen) called the Committee to order on Thursday afternoon. [SB 171](#), authored by Senator Randy Robertson (R-Catualala), was the only bill on the agenda and was tabled because the author nor any of the sponsors were able to present the bill.

House Transportation Committee

Representative Marcus Weidower (R-Watkinsville) called the meeting to order Thursday afternoon to discuss the following measures:

- [HR 999](#), by Representative Tom Kirby (R-Loganville), LC 39 3422S, urges the Department of Transportation to study truck safety. The study would be presented to the General Assembly during the next legislative session. Representative Kirby noted law requires trucks to drive in the far right lanes. This study would look at which lanes are safest and most efficient. The resolution received a DO PASS recommendation.
- [SB 558](#), authored by Senator Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega), has three sections. The first amends how notification of new DOT Board members to legislators. The second section has technical corrections for RFPs. Third, the bill would exclude express lane drivers' personal information from being collected and would exclude this information from open records requests. LC 39 3445S received a DO PASS recommendation.
- [SB 586](#), also authored by Senator Gooch, amends Part 2 of Article 3 of Chapter 4 of Title 32 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated. The bill would allow counties to enter into negotiations on design-build contracts for road projects. The measure received a DO PASS recommendation.
- [SR 463](#), again authored by Senator Gooch, creates the Joint Study Committee on the Electrification of Transportation to review electric vehicle infrastructure. The Committee would be comprised of 11 members and would require a report to be completed at the end of the year. The measure received a DO PASS recommendation.

House Ways and Means Committee

Chairman Shaw Blackmon (R-Bonaire) called the full committee to order on Thursday afternoon to discuss the following measures:

- [SB 370](#), carried by Senator Bill Cowsert (R-Athens), creates the "Fostering Success Act" in Chapter 7 of Title 48 in an effort to help children and youth who are aging out of the foster care system by providing tax credits for donations to qualified organizations which provide wraparound services to the youth aging out of the state's care. The measure received a DO PASS with no questions or comments.
- [SB 330](#), by Senator John Albers (R-Roswell), passed the House Insurance Committee and was recommitted to Ways and Means because of the tax impact. The legislation encourages individuals to become "living donors" to save lives and money. In Section 2 of the bill, it prohibits at O.C.G.A. 33-6-5 a life insurance company from canceling or denying life insurance coverage to an individual who becomes a living donor. Section 3 of the bill also gives a tax credit to individuals who donate an organ to an individual - incentivizing organ donation. Georgia has an "exemption" in the Tax Code, and this creates a "credit" in the Tax

Code of \$25,000. Section 4 of the legislation addresses “paid donation leave” for donors so that employers may receive a tax credit when allowing a donor to take such leave (30 days per donor per year in the amount of \$54,000 per tax year). Section 5 addresses the effective dates of the legislation and permits Sections 3 and 4 to become effective on Jan. 1, 2023 — permitting a longer period of time for the Department of Revenue to make necessary adjustments. Ways and Means Committee members did not have any questions or concerns, and the legislation received a DO PASS recommendation.

What’s Next

The General Assembly will reconvene for Legislative Day 36 on Monday, March 28 at 10 a.m..

The House is expected to consider the following measures on Legislative Day 36.

- [SB 87](#) - "Senator Jack Hill Veterans' Act"; enact
- [SB 152](#) - State and Other Flags; pledge of allegiance to the state flag; add language
- [SB 332](#) - "Inform Consumers Act" enact
- [SB 337](#) - Public Officers; suspension of compensation because of indictment for a felony; provide
- [SB 438](#) - Contracts; certain provisions relating to retainage of progress payments; change
- [SB 461](#) - Bails, Bonds; human trafficking as a bailable offense; add the offense
- [SB 562](#) - Department of Administrative Services; companies owned or operated by Russia to bid on or submit a proposal for a state contract; prohibit
- [SB 565](#) - Sentence and Punishment; any time after conviction; defendant convicted of an offense and sentenced as a direct result of being a victim of trafficking for labor or sexual servitude may petition the sentencing court to grant the relief of vacatur; provide
- [SB 566](#) - Surprise Billing Consumer Protection Act; a medical or traumatic condition includes a mental health condition or substance use disorder; emergency medical services include post-stabilization services; clarify
- [SB 588](#) - Local Boards of Education; all meetings of local boards of education shall be open to the public except as otherwise provided by law; provide

The Senate is expected to consider the following measures on Legislative Day 36:

- [HB 246](#) - Motor vehicles; issuance of replacement licenses and permits; increase fee
- [HB 464](#) - Guardian and ward; petition for appointment of temporary guardian of minor filed in probate court may be transferred to juvenile court; provide

- [HB 1059](#) - Insurance; unfair trade practices and unlawful inducements; provide for exclusions
- [HB 1292](#) - Education; prohibit students who participate in 4-H sponsored activities or programs from being counted as absent from school
- [HB 1308](#) - Insurance; allow plan sponsor to consent on behalf of an enrollee to electronic delivery of all communication
- [HB 1134](#) - Crimes and offenses; prosecute offenses involving criminal gang activity; provide for concurrent authority
- [HB 1425](#) - Medical cannabis; Governor to issue initial Class 1 and Class 2 production licenses for a limited time period; authorize
- [HB 1461](#) - Local government; annexation of territory; revise provisions relating to dispute resolution
- [HB 1481](#) - Motor vehicles; standards for issuance of dealer license plates; provide

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