



2024

capitol watch

Amended Fiscal Year 2024 House Budget Complete, Senate Committees Stand to Review

As we close out the week and with the shift in the legislative calendar due to the unfortunate passing of the Rules Chairman, we will officially be to the halfway point early next week.

The House signed off on its version of the Amended FY24 Budget on Wednesday by a 161-2 vote. [HB 915](#), the amended spending plan, is set with a revenue estimate of \$37.5 billion and this revenue estimate includes \$2 billion in surplus funding or a total infusion of \$5 billion (an increase of 15.6% over the original revenue estimate). Much of the funding in the Amended Budget is a large investment in the state's infrastructure — one-time funding and capital funding efforts.

Health

- In Medicaid, the budget includes a savings of \$181 million due to decline in enrollment as it redetermines enrollment and provides for \$120 million for increased utilization in that remaining population (also it includes \$93 million in funding for moving nursing homes to reflect the 2021 cost reports).
- The House added \$200,000 for statewide healthcare specialty assessments to help look for gaps in physician specialties (neurology, **psychiatry**, rheumatology, and endocrinology).
- The House version includes \$250,000 for the Family Health Centers of Georgia to increase access to care for patients in Cobb County (part of this center is funded with private and local funds).

- Within the Department of Public Health, the budget includes \$323,768 to restore funding for the Clayton County district health director and \$215,892 funding to upgrade the Georgia Vital Registration System.

Human Services

- \$10.4 million in funding is included for a child and adolescent crisis stabilization unit in Savannah.
- \$2 million is included to help address sheriffs' concerns about transporting individuals who are experiencing a mental health crisis.
- Housing efforts were addressed with \$475,625 to fund 246 housing lots and the House added \$500,000 to expand mental health services in Warner Robins (serving individuals with housing and wraparound services).
- ***\$60 million of the more than \$80 million needs are funded within the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities' capital needs for its hospitals.***
- \$3.2 million is added to the Department of Human Services to update SHINES and \$1.7 million is included for the Georgia Gateway benefits eligibility system.

Economic Development

- \$35 million is included to help renovate and improve the Atlanta Farmers Market.
- The House agreed to Governor Brian Kemp's proposal to provide \$23.9 million to continue the Rural Workforce housing program.
- The House supported the governor's recommendation to provide \$29.2 million to the Georgia World Congress Center Authority for public safety, security, and infrastructure costs (to help with hosting the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2025 College Playoff National Championship).
- The House supported the proposal to provide \$250 million to the Georgia Fund for low-interest loans for water and wastewater infrastructure development in local communities.

- The House also agreed to provide \$100 million to the Regional Economic Business Assistance program for economic development projects and \$100 million to the OneGeorgia Authority for rural economic and site development.
- The House added \$250,000 to the Public Service Commission for upgrades to the pipeline safety database (ensuring federal audit requirements) and another \$250,000 for upgrades to the consumer response database for utilities.

The Senate Appropriations subcommittees are now in review of the AFY 2024 budget to sign off and send to the Governor.

The 2024 Legislative Session will reconvene at 10:00am Monday, February 12th, 2024

Awaiting Signature or Veto on Governor Kemp's Desk

HB 557 - Rep. Ron Stephens

APRN Schedule II Prescribing - Seeks to to authorize physicians to delegate the authority to advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants to prescribe limited Schedule II controlled substances with a maximum 5-day supply.

House Floor Action

HB 883 - Rep. Devan Seabaugh

State Boards Teleconference - Seeks to authorize county boards of health and community services boards to conduct meetings via teleconference. This legislation passed the House 162-1. It has been assigned to the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee where it awaits a hearing.

HB 945 - Rep. Lee Hawkins

SHBP Out of Network - Seeks to provide protection for covered persons under a state health plan when an in-network hospital becomes out-of-network prior to the end of the plan year. The legislation clarifies that individuals who were covered under those plans would continue to have in-network coverage rates for the duration of the plan year. This legislation passed the House 167-1.

HB 1035 - Rep. Sharon Cooper

Opioid Antagonists - Seeks to expand the exemption of naloxone from the definition of a dangerous drug to include any opioid antagonist when used for drug overdose prevention. This legislation passed the House 163-0. It has been assigned to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee where it awaits a hearing.

New Notable Legislation

Senate

SB 455 - Sen. Brian Strickland

Medical Assistance Provisions - Seeks to bar liable third-party payers from refusing payment solely because a health care item or service did not receive prior authorization and to require a third-party payer to respond to a state inquiry regarding a health care claim within 90 days.

SB 456 - Sen. Brian Strickland

Central Caregiver Registry - Seeks to add to add disabled persons to the registry.

SB 460 - Sen. Clint Dixon

APRN/PA Supervision - Seeks to revise provisions relating to the number of advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants that a physician can authorize and supervise at any one time from 4 to 8.

SB 471 - Sen. Rick Williams

License Renewal Expirations - Seeks to change the expiration and renewal dates for certain licenses and certificates issued by certain professional licensing boards.

SB 473 - Sen. John Albers

Georgia Consumer Privacy Protection Act - Seeks to enact the "Georgia Consumer Privacy Protection Act"; to protect the privacy of consumer personal data in this state.

SR 542 - Sen. Gloria Butler

Colorectal Cancer Screenings Minimum Age - Seeks to encourage encourage the changing of the minimum age of colorectal cancer screenings.

SR 546 - Sen. Gloria Butler

Senate Colorectal Cancer Study Committee - Seeks to create the Senate Colorectal Cancer Study Committee.

House

HB 1114- Rep. Will Wade

Data Analysis for Tort Reform Act - Seeks to provide for data collection from certain insurers, insurance rating organizations, and state agencies.

HB 1125 - Rep. Sharon Cooper

Phase Out Subminimum Wage Person Disabilities - Seeks to phase out the payment of subminimum wage to persons with disabilities and to repeal provisions concerning exemptions to the state minimum wage law for persons with disabilities.

HB 1155 - Rep. Park Cannon

Newborn Baby and Mother Protection Act - Seeks to require coverage when pediatricians offer and provide mothers with screening for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.

HB 1170 - Rep. Lee Hawkins

Government Buildings Accessing Opioid Antagonists - Seeks to require that certain state government buildings, courthouses, and university buildings maintain and make accessible opioid antagonists.

HB 1176 - Rep. Trey Kelly

Insurance Coverage of Infant Formula - Seeks to provide for coverage of infant formula when a woman is medically unable to breastfeed.

HB 1179 - Rep. Sharon Cooper

Mental Health Step Therapy - Seeks to provide that step therapy protocols may not be required for medications prescribed for the treatment of serious mental illness under health benefit plans to establishment by health benefit plans of step therapy protocols, exception process, time requirements, appeals, construction, and application and to provide that step therapy protocols may not be required for medications prescribed for the treatment of serious mental illness under health benefit plans.

HB 1204 - Rep. Eddie Lumsden

Fertility Preservation - Seeks to require coverage for medically necessary expenses for standard fertility preservation services when a medically necessary treatment for cancer, sickle cell disease, or lupus may directly or indirectly cause iatrogenic infertility.

HB 1205 - Rep. Todd Jones

Equality in Financial Services Act - Seeks to prohibit discrimination in the provision of financial services and to require that financial institutions produce requested statements of specific reasons for the denial, restriction, or termination of services.

Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee

HB 434 - Rep. Lee Hawkins

Radiologist Assistants - Seeks to provide for the licensing of radiologist assistants. A substitute was offered. The measure would create a license for radiologist assistants who would practice under a radiologist's direct supervision. This would only allow licensed assistants to provide diagnostic testing; it would not allow assistants the ability to diagnose or prescribe medicine. The substitute reformats the original language to match other licensure code sections. The changes around the proposal in the substitute clarify "direct" supervision by a radiologist of these individuals. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved onto the Senate Rules Committee.

Senate Health and Human Service Committee

HB 502 - Rep. Deborah Silcox

Georgia Cosmetic Laser Services Act- Seeks to update the definition of “cosmetic laser services” and addresses supervision requirements, eliminating the requirement for a senior cosmetic laser services practitioner to be “on-site”. This legislation received a Do Pass and now sits in the Senate Rules Committee.

House Public Health Committee

HB 872 - Rep. Lee Hawkins

Dental Student Service Cancellable Loans - Seeks to expand the service cancelable loan program for physicians and other health care providers in underserved areas to include dental students. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved onto the House Rules Committee.

HB 1077 - Rep. Sharon Cooper

Mental Health Workforce - Seeks to create a grant program to provide funding to eligible institutions for additional behavioral health workforce training positions and to create a behavioral health provider loan repayment program. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved onto the House Rules Committee.

HB 1083 - Rep. Bruce Williamson

Residential Mental Health Services Licensing - Seeks to extend grace periods applicable to the Department of Community Health, including creation and promulgation of rules and regulations and the issuance of a one-time provisional license. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved onto the House Rules Committee.

Certificate of Need

No action this week.



For legislative highlights and review, watch ***Lawmakers***, which airs on **Georgia Public Broadcasting** at **7PM** every night the Georgia General Assembly is in session.

We will be sending out legislative updates regularly throughout the 2024 session, so keep an eye on your inbox to stay updated on all of the happenings from under the Gold Dome.

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