



2024

capitol watch

## Sine Die is on the Horizon

On Thursday, the House paused to celebrate the birthday of the late Speaker David Ralston. A sense of calmness strewed across the Gold Dome, as a special gift for his family, friends, and colleagues, was revealed. House leadership, former Governors Perdue and Deal alongside Governor Kemp joined in unveiling a commissioned portrait of the revered lawmaker that will hang just outside the House chamber.

The next two and final weeks of the 2024 legislative session and term are certain to provide a number of 'decorated' bills, contentious committee meetings, and long floor session days.

*The 2024 Legislative Session will reconvene at 10:00am Monday, March 18th, 2024*

### Awaiting Governor Kemp's Signature

#### **SB 348 - Sen. Rick Williams**

**Death Pronouncement** - Seeks to reduce the time from 180 to 60 days from when the deceased person last saw their physician and to be considered an unattended death. This improves the timeline to receive someone's death certificate.

#### **SB 370 - Sen. Mike Hodges**

**Human Trafficking Hotline Postings** - Seeks to require certain establishments to post human trafficking hotline information. Specifically, the bill extends this posting requirement to medical offices, convenience stores, body art studios, manufacturing facilities, and massage therapy businesses. The bill also provides for surprise inspections of massage therapy practices, requires that massage therapy licenses bear a photo of the therapist and that massage therapy board members receive training on human trafficking.

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## Senate Floor Action

### **HB 1339 - Rep. Butch Parrish**

**Certificate of Need** - Seeks to amend Title 31 relating to the State's Certificate of Need Law. Chairman Cowsert acknowledged that the issue of CON is complex, but a change was needed to increase access and address rural healthcare needs. In particular, he mentioned the need for perinatal services, mental health, and addressing maternal and infant mortality. Chairman Cowsert mentioned the Senate's concern about maternal healthcare desserts as well as the impacts the closure of Atlanta Medical Center has had on healthcare. This legislation addresses expenditures, exemptions (there are 34 in the proposed law), and an expedited appeal. There are changes contained in the bill addressing joint-venture ambulatory surgery centers, single specialty surgery centers, and capital threshold removals. There is also a new exemption to allow Morehouse School of Medicine to have an exemption for a short-stay facility as a teaching facility to fill a void caused by the closure of Atlanta Medical Center.

The final substitute includes language to provide an exemption for birthing centers and 2) to change the composition of the Comprehensive Health Care Coverage Commission, adding two individuals from the Minority Party. This legislation passed the Senate floor, 43-11 and will head back to the House. The belief is that this legislation will end up in a conference committee for final discussions between the two legislative bodies.

***You can watch the Senate floor presentation and discussion [here](#). It begins at 2:40:00***

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## COMMITTEE UPDATES

### **Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee**

#### **HB 441 - Rep. Katie Dempsey**

**Teledentistry** - Seeks to authorize and regulate teledentistry in this state by licensed dentists pursuant to permits issued by the Georgia Board of Dentistry. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved on to the Senate Rules committee.

#### **HB 844 - Rep. Ginny Ehrhart**

**Practice of Nutrition and Dietetics Act** - Seeks to provide for the licensure of dietitian nutritionists and nutritionists. The measure would repeal the 1981 version and reinstate it with modernized language including standards and practices, tailoring medical nutrition therapy, providing pathway for licensure for qualified professionals, and providing clarity on unlicensed professionals on scope and practice. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved on to the Senate Rules committee.

#### **HB 1046 - Rep. David Clark**

**APRN/PA Death Certificates** - Seeks to authorize advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants to sign death certificates under delegating authority by the physicians. The new version stripped out the permissions for APRNs and PAs the ability to write home health orders; it left intact the permission for them to sign death certificates and granted them the authority to do so in Titles 31 and 43. The APRN or PA would be required to have such authority in the practice agreement or protocol from the physician. Additionally, they will be required to complete biennial continuing education regarding the recognition and documentation of the causes of death and appropriate execution of death certificates, as approved by the Composite Medical Board and check a box that the certificate is signed by a non-physician. The bill was presented as a substitute that deletes lines 111-131. **SB 460 - Sen. Clint Dixon - APRN/PA Supervision;** was added - revising 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. Senator Rick Williams added language to provide immunity from liability. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved on to the Senate Rules committee.

**HB 1264 - Ron Stephens**

**Provider Wellness Program** - to authorize the Georgia Composite Board of Professional Counselors, Social Workers, and Marriage and Family Therapists to establish a professional health program to provide for monitoring and rehabilitation of impaired healthcare professionals. This legislation received a hearing only.

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**Senate Health and Human Service Committee**

**HB 143 - Rep. Danny Mathis**

**Continuous Glucose Monitors for Medicaid Recipients** - HB 143 is now **SB 481 - Sen. Mike Hodges: Georgia Health Care Professionals Data System** which seeks to provide for the establishment of the Georgia Health Care Professionals Data System. This legislation moves on to the Senate Rules committee.

**HB 663 - Rep. Matt Hatchett**

**No Patient Left Alone Act** - Seeks to establish certain rights of minors and adults admitted to hospitals to authorize hospitals and long-term care facilities to limit or restrict visitation in certain circumstances and to require visitors to wear personal protective equipment. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved on to the Senate Rules committee.

**HB 1072 - Rep. Sharon Cooper**

**Drug Repository** - Seeks to provide for pharmacist to pharmacy technician ratios in the program, require reverse drug distributors to make and document diligent efforts to donate drugs rather than destroy them and provide for substitution of drugs in some instances. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved on to the Senate Rules committee.

**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. Additionally, in a last minute committee substitute, **SB 519 - Sen. Ben Watson, Puberty Blockers**, was added to the legislation which seeks to prohibit prescribing or administering certain hormone replacement therapies and puberty blocking medications to minors. The legislation received a Do Pass on an 8-5 vote.

**HB 1326 - Rep. Ron Stephens**

**Dangerous Drug Clean Up** - Seeks to provide for certain provisions relating to Schedule I controlled substances, Schedule III controlled substances, and Schedule IV controlled substances. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved on to the Senate Rules committee.

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**Senate Insurance and Labor Committee**

**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. This legislation passed the House floor, 132-32. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved on to the Senate Rules committee.

**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. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved on to the Senate Rules committee.

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**Senate Local and Government Operations Committee**

**HB 883 - Rep. Devan Seabaugh**

**State Boards Teleconference** - Seeks to authorize county boards of health directors and community services boards to conduct meetings via teleconference. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved on to the Senate Rules committee.

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**House Technology and Infrastructure Committee**

**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. This

legislation received a hearing only after multiple substitute language and inquisitions from the committee on the necessity of the legislation.

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### House Public Health Committee

#### **SB 293 - Sen. Ben Watson**

**Public Health District Directors** - Seeks to establish in code that district health directors, appointed by the DPH Commissioner, serve as the chief executive officer of county boards of health. This bill removes the requirement that district health directors be a non-physician, as long as the Chief Medical Officer is one.. This bill further clarifies the right of the Commissioner to appoint an interim director to fill temporary vacancies without county board of health approval. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved onto the House Rules Committee.

#### **SB 456 - Sen. Brian Strickland**

**Central Caregiver Registry** - Seeks to add disabled persons to the registry. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved onto the House Rules Committee.

#### **SB 480 - Sen. Mike Hodges**

**Mental Health Workforce** - Seeks to provide for student loan repayment for mental health and substance use professionals serving in certain capacities. The Board for Physician Workforce will create the rules and regulations. The measure is contingent on appropriations. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved onto the House Rules Committee.

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### House Health Committee

#### **SB 505 - Sen. Blake Tillery**

**Hospital Transparency** - Seeks to revise provisions relating to required publication by hospital of certain financial documents on its website. The measure requires the Department to create templates and criteria for reporting by December 31, 2024 and requires hospitals to use these templates by July 1, 2025. Noncompliance would suspend the hospitals' ability to receive state funds with a 30-day letter from the department. The measure adds to the Department a Uniform Resource Locator, which the hospital must send the link for where these documents are posted. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved on to the Senate Rules committee. The measure also includes an amendment that requires a five percent community benefit floor. A new amendment added reporting requirements for for-profit hospitals and removed the community benefit language. This legislation received a Do Pass but was recommitted back to the Health Committee where it awaits further consideration.

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## House Education Committee

### **SB 32 - Sen. Jason Anivartarte**

**Alyssa's Law** - Seeks to require local education agencies to implement a mobile panic alert system capable of connecting disparate emergency services technologies to ensure real-time coordination between multiple state and local first responder agencies in the event of a school security emergency. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved onto the House Rules Committee.

### **SB 395 - Sen. Clint Dixon**

**Opioid Antagonists in Schools** - Seeks to to authorize the possession of opioid antagonists in schools. This legislation received a Do Pass and moved onto the House Rules Committee.



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

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**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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More information: Please reach out to our office at 770.435.5586 or reach out to us personally via our cell phones.

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