

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

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Special Announcements:

GATES Board of Directors Meeting:

Friday, April 30, 2021, ZOOM Call - 10:00 AM to noon

Awaiting Senate Appropriations Changes



**Dawn A.
Randolph, MPA**

March 15, 2021

Key Events This Week

Session is in four days - March 15-18

Senate Appropriations Committee

Awaiting Senate Budget recommendations

Senate Human Development Subcommittee of Appropriations

We are all awaiting the recommendations for their changes to the FY22 ([HB 81](#)) budget. The subcommittees had to get their recommendations to Appropriations Chair Blake Tillery (R-Vidalia) by Friday morning, March 12th. Word from several Senators was that Tillery was not accepting any new budget requests or language proposals. Which is interesting because revenues are up substantially for the year and there will be \$4.7 billion coming from the current \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill which President Joe Biden signed into law last week. Putting the federal funds that will flow to Georgia in perspective, that will be 17% added to the \$27.2 billion state budget for FY22. (At the end of the update are the Governor and House budget recommendations.)

There is great disagreement between Republicans and Democrats in both Chambers about how to use the \$4.7 billion. Governor Brian Kemp is awaiting guidance from the US Department of Treasury; however, the Georgia Constitution gives the Governor complete say

over how the funds will be used. The House passed a state income tax cut bill shaving \$140 million from the budget. The COVID-19 relief bill prohibits states from using the federal funds to supplant existing state dollars or using it for income tax cuts. Legislators are in a quandary over what to do because each party has ideological differences for its use. Democrats want to expand Medicaid and fund services for people with disability and mental health issues. Republicans want to cut income taxes and use for one-time expenditures such as infrastructure projects. While we all wait on our little slice of the pie of \$1,400 the Governor and Legislative Leaders who control the purse are grappling over what to do with \$4.7 billion dollars for the next two years.

Bills and Resolutions

Crossover Day did provide us with a few bills to track during the last two and half weeks of the session. Here is an overview of what I am following now. Please let me know if you have any thoughts on these bills. While I do not see them as needing our advocacy they may be of interest.

[HR 372](#) - Study eliminating sub-minimum wage use and find ways to increase competitive integrated employment

Rep. El-Mahdi (D-Stockbridge) and several other Democrats introduced [HR 372](#) on March 10th. The resolution urges Georgia's Employment First Council "to develop recommendations on how best to transition current use of sub-minimum wage practices to competitive integrated employment options for people with developmental disabilities..." The bill directs the Council "to hold public hearings, study, and construct a strategic plan to present to the General Assembly before December 31, 2021". The goal is to eliminate sub-minimum wage use and find ways to "increase competitive integrated employment". Since this is only a House Resolution it does not need to crossover. Placed in the House Industry and Labor Committee.

[SB 47](#) - Expands eligibility, revises requirements and recalculates amounts of the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Act

Senator Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega) and several members of the Republican Leadership of the Senate are sponsoring this bill to expand eligibility and requirements of Georgia's Special Needs Scholarship. Basically it pays for children with a special need diagnosis to attend private schools. Senator Gooch stated that 3% of those with an IEP take advantage of the scholarship. The Scholarship has been in place for the last fourteen years. The bill expands those eligible by diagnosed conditions to include children with mental health and substance use disorders as well as those on the autism spectrum. It addresses military families who move frequently to allow them to take advantage of the scholarship sooner. It enumerates the types of services which the scholarship can fund in Section 3 of the bill. Most Democrats in the Senate opposed the bill arguing that private school vouchers take funds from public schools and the

scholarship is still out of reach for moderate to low income families who cannot afford the extra private school fees or the ability to obtain a doctor's diagnosis or Section 504 designation. The bill passed the Senate 33-14 on 3/3/21 and has been referred to the House Education Committee. If you would like to see the Senate debate click on this [link](#) and you can fast forward to time 1:58. March 3rd was a long day in the Senate so if you want to watch this debate you will want to skip ahead.

FY '22 Budget Details - House Recommendations

NOTE: Cuts are in bright red while any additions are in green and house changes in purple. Overall any increase in funds have come from the federal government due to COVID-19 and various changes to the FMAP formula (Federal Medical Assistance Percentage) or from the CARES Act. Cuts or reductions in funding was supplanted with federal funds. If you want to look at the [budget tracking document](#) you can view it online.

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation

Department Administration

Purpose: The purpose of this appropriation is to help people with disabilities to become fully productive members of society by achieving independence and meaningful employment.

Recommended Change:

Governor made no recommended changes.

House made no changes.

VR Program

Purpose: The purpose of this appropriation is to assist people with disabilities so that they may go to work.

Governor made no recommended changes.

House made no changes.

Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities - Service Impact

Adult Developmental Disabilities Services

Purpose: The purpose of this appropriation is to promote independence of adults with significant developmental disabilities through institutional care, community support and respite, job readiness, training, and a crisis and access line.

Governor Recommended Changes:

- Increase fund for 100 additional slots for the New Options Waiver (NOW) and the Comprehensive Supports Wavier Program (COMP) for individuals with intellectual disabilities **\$1,957,356.**
- Increase funds to reflect the adjustment in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) from 67.03% to 66.8% **\$1,541,873.**

- Increase funds to reflect the loss of the enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency **\$10,925,195.**

House Recommended Additions:

- Annualize funds for a behavioral health crisis center for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. State Funds **\$7,028,616.**
- Provide funds for a 5% rate increase for intellectual developmental disability providers with approval by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. State Funds **\$12,343,734.**
- Restore funds for non-waiver services in family support. State Funds **\$4,656,799.**

Total Change: State Funds **\$27,528,378** & State Funds increase because of COVID-19 FMAP **10,925,195**

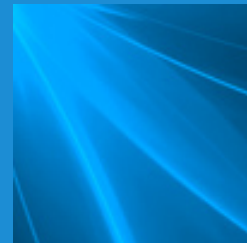
House Recommended Language changes without any additional funds:

Pending final approval by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, reflect the department's intent to amend Appendix K to provide a time-limited rate increase for providers serving the intellectual and developmental disability population, including adult day centers and residential services. *(H:Yes)*

Pending final approval by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, reflect the intent to continue to serve the estimated 188 individuals who are currently receiving community living supports services who may be impacted by the COMP waiver renewal with alternate service(s). By December 1, 2021, provide a report to the chairs of the House Appropriations Human Resources Subcommittee and the Senate Appropriations Human Development and Public Health Subcommittee on how this population will continue to receive services based on their assessed need following the extended transition period. *(H:Yes)*

Call for Information

THE PORTAL is a communication tool for GATES and GATES members. If you have stories about your organization, staff announcements, program descriptions, or other information you want to share with other GATES members, please send the info to Charles Hall, chall@asginfo.net



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251 SL White Blvd.
LaGrange, GA 30241
Phone: 706-298-0477

Visit the GATES Website

GATES | 706-298-0477, 251 SL White Blvd, LaGrange, GA 30241

