

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

In This Issue:

#SineDie2021

Special Announcements:

GATES Board of Directors Meeting:

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

#SineDie2021



**Dawn A.
Randolph, MPA**

April 1, 2021

Key Events This Week

Session 40th day March 31st - They are done!

FY 2022 Budget

- *Chambers pass budget late night on 40th day*

Legislation

- *The House and Senate had two long days on Monday, March 29th and Wednesday, March 31st to get out the leadership priority bills.*

Senate Appropriations

The Senate finally voted 52-0 on the FY22 ([HB 81](#)) around dinner and the House voted 148-21 around 10:30pm on the final day, March 31st. State revenue was approved at \$27,252,569,596, which is only slightly more by \$7.6 million than the Governor estimated. The biggest impact to the budget comes from all the COVID-19 federal relief funding. Federal funds are estimated to be around \$15.5 billion. While the majority goes toward Medicaid and block grants, there is the additional \$4 billion that has not been itemized and left to spend at the Governor's discretion. Agencies generate revenue from fees and other sources to bring in about \$7 billion. That brings the total Georgia budget for government expenditures to nearly \$50 billion

(\$49,892,722,486 to be exact). The Revenue breakdown in on pages 1-3. Georgia did not suffer the terrible revenue loss due to the pandemic as expected.

Senate Appropriations Chair Blake Tillery (R-Vidalia) presented the conference report of the FY22 Budget. [You can view it here starting at 1:08](#). He reported that 70-80% of the Senate changes were adopted in conference. Around 1:20 Senator Elena Parent (D-Atlanta) asked about austerity cuts from last year with Senator Tillery responding that most have been restored. Senator Parent acknowledged there is federal money coming in but what about the other departments cut in June. Tillery said they have mostly been restored. Senator Parent pressed him about 10% cuts. Senator Parent challenged Chair Tillery that the budget does not fully fund all agencies by restoring cuts from last year. Unfortunately the debate ended there. I sent Senator Parent a text explaining the funds for GVRA were not restored and she showed my text to the Chairman. This of course will require follow-up over the next few weeks.

There were no changes to administration or services in the GVRA budget which can be found on pages 108-110 of the Conference Committee Report, the majority on page 109. The Conference Committee Report can be viewed [here](#). The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities budget changes are at the end of this update.

Chamber & Committee Proceedings

If you would like to go back and view any day of the legislative session here is the link to the [Senate Chamber Archives](#) and here is the one to the [House Chamber](#). You can fast forward to issues you are more interested in seeing. Committees can be viewed by going to that Committee meeting page on the website and choosing the Committee => About => Other Documents/Meeting Archives.

Bills and Resolutions

[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". The House Industry and Labor Committee did not consider the bill during the final weeks of the session.

I spoke with the sponsor, Rep. Elo-Mahdi, who told me that he hopes the Chair of House Industry and Labor, Rep. Bill Werkheiser (R-Glennville) may take it up during the Special Session which will likely convene in the early fall this year to work through reapportionment to redesign the US House of Representative, State House and State Senate Districts based on the current Census data from 2020. While I have never known the legislature to vote on legislation, except new district lines, during a Special Session they can hold committee meetings. GATES honored Chairman Werkheiser with Legislator of the Year a few years back so it is time to touch base with him again. Because this is the first of the biennium session this bill can be considered next session and it is Rep. El-Mahdi's intent to get it passed. He would like to get out and visit CRPs either virtually or in-person over the next few months.

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 March 3rd, then House Education Committee made some minor changes with it passing the full House on March 25th by 91-71, a very slim margin of 2 votes. Again, the House Democrats were not in favor of passing the bill and tried to get the vote reconsidered but that motion failed by 61-96. The bill now goes to the Governor for his consideration.

FY '22 Budget Details - House Recommendations

NOTE: Cuts are in bright red while any additions are in green and house & senate changes in purple. The Conference Committee is in magenta. 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](#) with the Senate changes 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.

Senate made no changes.

Conference Committee 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.

Senate made an add for FODAC (*Friends of Disabled Adults and Children*) of State Funds \$25,000 for equipment. **The Conference Committee reduced the amount to \$20,000.**

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 = House and Senate have agreed:

- 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 = Senate agreed to all House 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-wavier services in family support. State Funds **\$4,656,799.**

Senate Recommended Additions and Conference Committee Agreed

- Increase funds for respite services with priority to rural communities. **State Funds \$1,500,000**
- Increase funds for Rockdale Cares for respite services. **State Funds \$100,000**

Total Change State Funds **\$29,128,378** & State Funds increase because of COVID-19 FMAP **10,925,195**

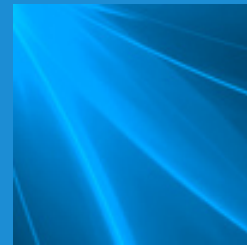
House Recommended Language changes without any additional funds:

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) (S: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) (S: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



GATES

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports

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

