

News from GATES...

Georgia Association of Training, Employment and Supports



THE GATES PORTAL

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Sine Die 2022
Edition

Special Announcements:

GATES Board of Directors Meeting:
Friday, April 22, 2022, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM,
Tommy Nobis Center

Sine Die 2022 Edition



**Dawn A.
Randolph, MPA**

April 8, 2022

Key Events This Week

Session 40th day April 4th - They are done!

*FY 2023 Budget
Chambers pass final budget late night on 40th day*

*Legislation
The House and Senate had very long days on Friday, April 1st and Monday,
April 4th to get out all their priority bills.*

Final FY 23 Budget

Another late night Sine Die vote on the full fiscal year budget occurred this year. Monday, April 4th, as the day went into evening the Senate voted 53-0 for the FY 23 ([HB 911](#)) budget and then Chairman Terry England (R-Auburn) presented the Conference Committee report on the budget for his last time to a vote of 160-5. This is the largest budget the state of Georgia has ever passed at \$30,203,913,322 with federal funds around \$17.7 billion. Along with other fees and taxes collected the full Georgia budget is just shy of \$60 billion at \$57,944,795,757. There are still funds resulting from the American Recovery Act for COVID-19 related relief. However, the biggest increase is from Georgia revenue, and it could have been larger, but there were initiatives to refund taxes. The legislature provided around a \$1.5 billion tax

relief in the Amended FY 22 budget that people will receive (\$250/single \$500/joint) when they file their 2021 taxes and then a larger tax cut overall starting in FY 24 around \$1 billion to lower the tax rate gradually over a decade from 5.75% to 4.99% with increased standard exemptions ([HB 1437](#)).

FY 23 Budget Details

The tracking document provides the details of the budget development from the House to the Senate to the Conference Committee. You can view the document [here](#).

Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities pg 27-33 on tracking document

Provider Rate Increase – originally a 1% increase (\$2,450,000) by the House, which the Senate took out saying they needed to wait for a rate study, but the Conference Committee put back in and increased to 2% (\$4,900,000).

NOW and COMP waiver slots – The Governor recommended 100 new slots (\$1,984,115), the House increased to 325 (\$6,598,720) and the Senate added more for a total of 513 (\$10,328,856) which the conferees agreed to fund all 513 new slots.

Mental health funding for HB 1013 - \$33,396,396 appears to be tied to the mental health bill. There is also funding in justice involved agencies.

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation pg 86 on tracking document

\$10 million to open priorities categories – The Senate agreed with the House to place \$2 million state dollars in to draw down \$8 million of federal 110 matching funds for a total of \$10 million new dollars for serving people directly. While this funding is not a direct line item to providers, it is a direct authorization to only spend the money for services to people and open the categories. A big win for people with disabilities needing to get back to work. These are the funds we advocated for this session.

No new funding for maintenance and repairs - Originally the Governor had put in a \$4,310,000 state funding without any match for capital maintenance and repair costs. The House used \$2 million to fund the match for services in priority categories and cut the rest. The Senate restored \$2,155,000 of these repair funds but the conference committee decided to cut that and let GVRA use existing bond money for repairs.

Organizations with funds flow through GVRA

Statewide Independent Living Centers (SILCs) \$160,000 state funds for a total of \$800,000 with match from federal funds. (Original request was for \$200,000 for a total of \$1 million)

Georgia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing \$20,000 state funds

Georgia Radio Reading Service (\$54,000)

Friends of Disabled Adults and Children (FODAC) Conference Committee directed GVRA to use existing funds within the agency. (Original request was for \$100,000, no match)

Speaker Ralston's Mental Health Bill passes with some changes

After the mental health parity bill or [HB1013](#) received overwhelming support in the House with a vote March 8th of 169-3, it did not have an easy time in the Senate. After the Senate divided the bill up into three sections to review individually over two weeks there was a lot of misinformation and fake information that began to take over the process. Various religious and conservative groups were claiming the bill would force business owners to have coverage for treatment against their religious beliefs or protect pedophiles from prosecution. While none of this was in the bill Senators did remove all mentions of the World Health Organization and data from WHO as well as leave the current threshold of mandated diagnosis and treatment alone. In the end much of the bill remained intact although wording was changed. The amended version passed the Senate 54-0 and the House agreed to the Senate changes passing it 166-0 on March 30th. On the last day of the session, April 4th, the Governor held a ceremony to sign the bill into law.

What does HB 1013 actually do?

1. Insurance companies that provide coverage of mental health and substance use disorder treatment will need to supply that coverage on par with physical health as outlined by the federal law MHPAEA (Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act), passed in 2008. The federal parity requirements have been in place for 12 years now, but the state of Georgia has neither been collecting data nor enforcing compliance. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) established guidelines a decade ago and Georgia has ignored them. The Georgia Department of Insurance and Public Health will be responsible for reviewing, monitoring, and collecting data on the compliance by insurance companies who cover mental health and SUD services as part of their coverage packages.
2. Mental health professionals can have education loans cancelled if they agree to serve in underserved areas of the state.
3. Grants and coordination for the Accountability Courts will be enhanced throughout the state. These are courts where one who has a criminal offense and a diagnosis can receive coordinated care and less jail time while completing their sentence.
4. Provide a complaint process for consumers regarding their insurance coverage for mental health and SUD services.
5. Care management organizations providing services to the state (Medicaid) must comply with the minimum 85% medical loss ratio (they must spend 85% of state contract funds on consumer medical care).
6. Provide a more comprehensive and better communication for those requiring involuntary outpatient treatment.
7. Increasing options for peace officers to take a person to an emergency receiving facility for involuntary treatment.
8. Extends the work of the Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Commission.
9. Directs the Department of Community Health to study the reimbursement rates, fund distribution and coordinated care for child and adolescent mental health and substance use disorders services.

Commission for the Blind and the Visually Impaired

Last year Senator Gail Davenport (D-Jonesboro) introduced [SB 108](#) and it seemed like it was going nowhere until March 4th when the Senate Government Oversight Committee passed it out and it got a full Senate vote passing 41-12 on Crossover Day. Then the House Committee of State Planning and Community Affairs passed it out on March 25th. But it never made it to the House floor before Sine Die so it failed this year.

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 Caitlin Hyatt, chyatt@asginfo.net



GATES

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