

EMORY



OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

2021 STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSION REPORT



EMORY'S OGCA TEAM

Emory's Office of Government and Community Affairs (OGCA) team is comprised of nine members; two who manage federal affairs, two focused on state affairs, four members who work in community affairs, and an Executive Administrative Assistant. The 2021 State Legislative Session Report is brought to you by the State Affairs team.

The OGCA State Affairs team serves as the official liaison between Emory and Georgia's legislative, executive and regulatory bodies, including the Governor's Office, the Georgia General Assembly and state agencies that administer higher education and healthcare programs. It is our responsibility to continually monitor each of these entities for any legislative or regulatory changes that could impact Emory. We strive to create new, and build upon existing, relationships with state officials and to find ways for Emory to strengthen its partnership with the state. Please do not hesitate to reach out to any of us with questions.



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THE NEW NORMAL

During typical state legislative sessions, the third floor of the Capitol is packed with lawmakers, staff, lobbyists and visitors with little room to move around, much less allow for social distancing. This year looked much different than years past. When lawmakers arrived at the Capitol, new policies and procedures were in effect to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Not only were lawmakers required to submit to COVID testing twice a week, but masking was also mandatory for all members and the public that entered the Capitol.

While this session presented challenges and a new normal, the OGCA team was able to continue its work to advance Emory's mission and priorities at the state level. The following report details the budget impact to Emory, relevant legislation that passed and issues that were discussed during the 2021 session.

BUDGETS: AMENDED FY 2020 AND FY 2021

Each year, the General Assembly passes and the Governor signs two separate budgets, with the primary one being the budget for the upcoming fiscal year (July 1-June 30). The other is the "amended" fiscal year budget, which adjusts the current fiscal year to account for unanticipated needs that arise.

Last session, Emory faced significant reductions in several state-funded programs in the FY 2021 budget due to the projected impact of COVID-19 on state revenues. This year, we are pleased to share that Emory did not receive any further cuts in the Amended FY 2021 budget that funds the state from January – June 30, 2021. Emory receives around \$20 million annually in state funding for a number of programs like Georgia Memory Net, a statewide program dedicated to the early diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, as well as programs involving autism, behavioral health and intensive care. Emory also receives state funds through the Zell and HOPE Scholarships for Georgia students.

AFY 2021

The Amended FY 2021 appropriation for total state funds is 2.5% more (**+\$655 million**) than the original FY 2021 State Fund appropriation approved by the 2020 General Assembly. Budget items of interest to Emory include:

- No Medicaid payment rate cuts for any provider group.
- **\$7 million** in initial funding for the FY 2022 implementation of the Patients First Act. The Patients First Act, from the 2019 session, authorized the Department of Community Health to submit a Section 1115 waiver to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to increase Medicaid eligibility.
- **\$36 million** to fully fund both deemed and non-deemed private hospitals eligible for the Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) program.
- **\$27.1 million** to replace and modernize the public health surveillance system and to implement a new vaccine management system.

FY 2022

The FY 2022 appropriation for total state funds is \$27.3 billion or 5.1% more (+\$1.3 billion) than the original FY 2021 appropriation. Budget items of interest to Emory include:

- **\$300,000** in increased funding to provide an additional three-year grant to rural hospitals for Electronic Intensive Care Units (eICU) to improve patient outcomes and reduce the need for long distance travel away from local communities. This funding is in addition to the existing \$600,000 Emory receives each year for the eICU program.
- **\$76 million** in state funding for the implementation of the Patients First Act (2019 Session), appropriated in FY 2022, including \$65 million for benefits and \$1 million for additional eligibility staff.
- **\$7.1 million** in new funding to increase 18 select primary care and OB/GYN codes to 2020 Medicare levels.
- **\$5.3 million** in funding for Year 2 of 7 for Mercer School of Medicine's medical school campus in Columbus.
- **\$2.6 million** in funding for 188 new residency slots in primary care medicine throughout Georgia.

2021 STATE STRATEGIC GOALS

- Continue introducing President Fennes to key stakeholders and increase his exposure to state government leaders.
- Explore opportunities for President Fennes to be engaged in state-appointed boards.
- Advocate for continued support for academic health care, research, and higher education impacted by the ongoing pandemic.
- Leverage Emory's subject matter experts to cultivate new collaborations with the state and strengthen existing partnerships.
- Offer strategic campus invitations to influential policy makers to learn more about Emory.
- Provide internal expertise and guidance regarding the public policy and state engagement process.
- Develop relationships and increase visibility to newly elected officials throughout the state.

UPCOMING 2021 STUDY COMMITTEES

Study committees are appointed or selected to perform a specific task or study a certain issue. After the committee examines the topic, a report is released which includes any findings, recommendations, or legislative proposals the committee deems appropriate. The following legislative study committees are expected to meet this summer and fall. The Emory OGCA team looks forward to participating in these committees to provide information that could help further Emory's mission.

HOUSE STUDY COMMITTEES

House Study Committee on Childhood Lead Exposure (HR 52)

- The committee will study the full effect of lead exposure on children and make recommendations on how Georgia can effectively prevent adverse outcomes.

House Rural Development Council (HR 214)

- The committee, originally scheduled to sunset December 2020, was reauthorized until December 1, 2022. The House Rural Development Council will continue to address economic development and related policy areas including education, infrastructure, access to health care, and economic growth incentives in rural Georgia.

SENATE STUDY COMMITTEES

Senate Sickle Cell Anemia Study Committee (SR 151)

- The committee will study the needs of Georgia residents on the prevention and treatment of sickle cell anemia and identify sources of funding to address such needs.

Senate Study Committee on Violence Against Health Care Workers (SR 281)

- The committee will study the causes and the solutions to the ever-increasing violence committed against health care workers.

HOUSE LEGISLATION THAT PASSED

The General Assembly introduces over 2,000 bills annually, and the OGCA state team tracks every bill that has the potential to impact Emory. While only a small percentage of bills reach the finish line with a signature from the Governor, a bill's mere introduction is informative and the OGCA state team pays attention to all legislative priorities. The following bills originated in the House, passed both chambers, and are relevant to Emory because they have the ability to impact specific areas of our mission.

House Bill 34 – Audiology and Speech Language Pathology Interstate Compact Act by Rep. Dave Belton (R-Buckhead) enters Georgia into the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact, pending passage of required legislation in 10 states. Provisions of the compact will be administered by the State Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology. The compact allows for practitioners, including active-duty military personnel and their spouses, who are licensed in a member-state to more easily practice in the other member-states, so long as the licensee remains active and in good standing, among other requirements. The bill requires the board to conduct national background checks of applicants through the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Effective following passage by 10 other states

House Bill 80 – Amended Fiscal Year 2021 Budget by Speaker David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge)

For additional details, please see page 3.

Effective February 15, 2021

House Bill 81 – Fiscal Year 2022 Budget by Speaker David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge) For additional details, please see page 4.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 93 – Clinical Labs Licensure by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) eliminates duplicative state licensure requirements and regulation of clinical laboratories that are certified by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 112 – COVID-19 Liability Immunity by Rep. Trey Kelley (R-Cedartown) extends the sunset date of the Georgia COVID-19 Pandemic Business Safety Act that was passed last session. The underlying bill, SB 359, shields Georgia businesses and health-care providers from lawsuits brought by people who contract COVID-19. Over the last year, this law has protected a wide range of Georgia enterprises from COVID-19 related legal claims, so long as they post certain warning signs and do not willfully or grossly neglect their patrons or workers. HB 112 will extend those protections until July 14, 2022.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 119 – Joint Corporations with Chiropractors and Physicians by Rep. Lee Hawkins (R-Gainesville) allows chiropractors to jointly own professional corporations with physicians.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 128 – Gracie’s Law by Rep Rick Williams (R-Milledgeville) prohibits providers and insurers from discriminating against potential organ transplant recipients due solely to the physical or mental disability of the potential recipient. The bill also revises the wording of parental consent for a minor that is a candidate for nonresuscitation. HB 128 does not change current law but clarifies that a parent or legal guardian of a minor patient, if one is available, must give consent for a do-not-resuscitate order.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 141 – Georgia Crime Victims Emergency Fund by Rep. Houston Gaines (R-Athens) requires that payments made by the Georgia Crime Victims Emergency Fund to medical service providers be in accordance with the list of reasonable charges published by the State Board of Workers' Compensation, unless an investigation by the Georgia Crime Victims Compensation Board shows that there is a reasonable justification for the deviation.

Effective July 1, 2022

House Bill 163 – Medicaid Enrollment by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) requires the Department of Community Health to submit a state plan amendment to implement express lane eligibility in Medicaid and the PeachCare for Kids Program. Upon approval of this amendment, the bill directs the Department of Human Services to automatically enroll and renew eligible children in Medicaid and the PeachCare for Kids Program based on application data received from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 234 – Surprise Billing by Rep. Lee Hawkins (R-Gainesville) known as the ‘Self-funded Healthcare Plan Opt-in to the Surprise Billing Consumer Protection Act,’ allows self-funded healthcare plans to annually elect to participate in the ‘Surprise Billing Consumer Protection Act’. Any participating healthcare plan must elect to participate starting on January 1 or the first day of its plan year and must provide notice to the commissioner of the Department of Insurance at least 30 days before the effective date. The Department of Insurance must maintain a list on its website of all self-funded healthcare plans that have chosen to participate.

Effective April 29, 2021

House Bill 245 – Podiatry Criminal Background Checks by Rep. John LaHood (R-Valdosta) amends a provision relating to fingerprint and criminal background checks used for the practice of podiatry by requiring the need for satisfactory results from a fingerprint records check for only new license applicants and reinstatements, not license renewals.

Effective May 4, 2021

House Bill 268 – Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact Act by Rep. Bill Werkheiser (R-Glenville) enters Georgia into the Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact, pending passage of required legislation in 10 total U.S. states. Provisions of the compact will be administered by the State Board of Occupational Therapy. The compact allows for practitioners, including active-duty military personnel and their spouses, who are licensed in a member state to more easily practice in the other member states, so long as the licensee remains active and in good standing, among other requirements. Further, the bill requires the board to conduct national background checks of applicants through the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Effective following passage by 10 other states

House Bill 271 – Matching Payments for Emergency Medical Services by Rep. Bert Reeves (R-Marietta) authorizes the Department of Community Health (DCH) to assess one or more provider matching payments on a sub-class of ambulance services, as defined by the Board of Community Health. The board is authorized to discontinue any provider matching payment assessed and will cease to impose any such matching payments if: the provider matching payments are not eligible for federal matching funds under Title XIX of the Social Security Act; the department reduces or supplants Medicaid payment rates to ambulance providers as such rates are in effect on June 30, 2021; or reduces or supplants the provider matching payment rate adjustment factors utilized in developing the State Fiscal Year 2021 capitated rates for Medicaid managed care organizations.

Any provider matching payments assessed will be deposited into a segregated account within the Indigent Care Trust Fund, used solely for the purpose of obtaining federal financial participation for medical assistance payments to providers on behalf of Medicaid recipients, and be subject to appropriation by the General Assembly.

Additionally, DCH is authorized to impose a penalty of up to six percent on the amount of any owed provider matching payments for any ambulance service that fails to pay a provider matching payment within the time required by DCH for each month, or fraction thereof, that such provider matching payment is overdue. Furthermore, DCH is authorized to inspect and copy the records of an ambulance service for purposes of auditing the calculation of the provider matching payment.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 307 – Georgia Telehealth Act by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) authorizes health care providers to provide telehealth services from home and patients to receive telehealth services from their home, workplace, or school. Additionally, HB 307 prohibits insurers from requiring separate deductibles or an in-person consultation before paying for telehealth services. This bill allows for audio-only care under certain circumstances, such as a lack of broadband connection.

HB 307 restricts insurers from requiring providers to use a specific telehealth platform or vendor. Insurers are not allowed to restrict the prescribing of medications through telehealth that are more restrictive than what is required under applicable state and federal laws for in-person prescribing of medications. Additionally, this bill requires that each provider maintain documentation of each health care service provided through telehealth in a manner that is at least as extensive and thorough as documentation maintained for in-person services.

Effective May 4, 2021

House Bill 316 – Pharmacy to Pharmacy Tech Ratio by Rep. Ron Stephens (R-Savannah) increases the pharmacist-to-pharmacy technician ratio from three to four for pharmacists directly supervising technicians. At any time during which the pharmacist directly supervises four technicians, two of these technicians must be certified. At any time during which the pharmacist directly supervises three technicians, one of these technicians must be certified.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 346 – Jarom’s Act by Rep. Dominic LaRiccia (R-Douglas) authorizes emergency medical service providers to administer hydrocortisone sodium intramuscularly for the purpose of providing emergency care to a patient who: has congenital adrenal hyperplasia or any other adrenal insufficiency; is believed to be in adrenal crisis; or is in possession of hydrocortisone sodium succinate in packaging that clearly states the appropriate dosage and has an unbroken seal.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 367 – Controlled Substances by Rep. Butch Parrish (R-Swainsboro) is the annual narcotics and drug update regarding Schedules I, II, III, IV, and V controlled substances to capture new synthetic opiates and synthetic marijuana. Various substances are added to or removed from the various schedules, including the new addition of N-substituted benzimidazole structural class substances to Schedule I. Further, the definition of “dangerous drug” in O.C.G.A. 16-13-71 is revised to add and remove various drugs, while also adding new exemptions to the term.

Effective May 4, 2021

House Bill 370 – Joint Hospital Authorities by Rep. Jan Jones (R-Milton) provides term limits for members of joint hospital authorities of 12 years or three consecutive terms. This bill only applies to the Fulton and DeKalb hospital authorities. Additionally, this bill restricts hospital authorities from utilizing revenues to perform any power or duty delegated in a lease.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 395 – Professional Counselors Licensure Compact by Rep. Dave Belton (R-Buckhead) enters Georgia into the Professional Counselors Licensure Compact, pending passage of required legislation in 10 total U.S. states. Provisions of the compact will be administered by the Georgia Composite Board of Professional Counselors, Social Workers, and Marriage and Family Therapists. The compact allows for practitioners, including active-duty military personnel and their spouses, who are licensed in a member state to more easily practice in the other member

states, so long as the licensee remains active and in good standing, among other requirements. The bill allows the board to conduct national background checks of applicants through the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Effective following passage by 10 other states

House Bill 454 – Online Provider Directories by Rep. Mark Newton (R-Augusta) requires an insurer to reimburse a provider at the most recent in-network rates for 180 days after a provider’s contract terminates or until the last day of a person’s coverage, whichever is sooner, if the insurer’s provider directory included a provider as a participating provider during the open enrollment period. During a public health emergency and for 150 days after the expiration of the public health emergency, the bill prohibits an insurer from terminating a provider from the insurer’s network and requires in-network reimbursement rates to be maintained.

Effective July 1, 2022

House Bill 458 – Georgia Composite Medical Board by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) requires all newly appointed board members of the Georgia Composite Medical Board to participate in training and education to support greater understanding of sexual misconduct, sexual boundaries, and impacts of trauma and implicit bias within three months of such appointment. All board members in office as of January 1, 2022 are required to participate in this training by March 30, 2022.

Additionally, this bill authorizes the board to refuse a license, certificate, or permit and issue discipline for members who have pleaded guilty or were found guilty by a court of law of committing a sexual assault on a patient. If the board finds that the public health, safety, or welfare imperatively requires emergency action pursuant to an alleged sexual assault on a patient by a licensee, the board may suspend a license, pending proceedings for revocation or other action.

On or after January 1, 2022, all physicians are required to receive one-time education and training, for a minimum of two hours, regarding professional boundaries and physician sexual misconduct. This education and training will include subject matter on how to proceed with basic as well as sensitive or intimate examinations and the effective communication techniques with patients.

No later than January 1, 2022, the board will develop and identify education resources and materials for physicians, board members, and board staff to support greater understanding of sexual misconduct, sexual boundaries, and impacts of trauma and implicit bias. On or after June 30, 2022, this same type of education and training applies to each medical or osteopathic school in good standing with the board.

Furthermore, House Bill 458 requires physicians, registered professional nurses, licensed practical nurses, and physician assistants to report the name of a physician to the board if such provider has reasonable cause to believe that the physician committed a sexual assault. No provider required to report a physician to the board, who in good faith either reports or fails to report, will be subject to civil or criminal liability or discipline for unprofessional conduct.

The board will compile a report to the governor and General Assembly on January 1 of each year on the number of physicians the board has conducted sexual assault investigations on and the outcome of the investigations. In no event will any identifying information be included in this

report for investigations that exonerate the physician, or do not result in the refusal, revocation, or suspension of a license, or a private or public disciplinary order.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 479 - Repeal Citizen's Arrest Law by Rep. Bert Reeves (R-Marietta) repeals the citizen's arrest statute from the Code, provides instances in which law enforcement officers may make arrest outside of their jurisdiction, and establishes when certain private citizens may detain individuals.

Law enforcement officers may make an arrest for an offense outside of their jurisdiction: if the offense is committed in an officer's presence or within an officer's immediate knowledge; when in immediate pursuit of an offender for an offense committed within the officer's jurisdiction; or while assisting another law enforcement officer in the jurisdiction of the other officer.

Owners and employees of a retail establishment may detain an individual if they reasonably believe that the individual committed, or attempted to commit, theft by shoplifting, refund fraud, or theft by unlawful use of receipts or universal product code labels. The owner or employees of any business entity operating on their own property, or on the property of others on which they are doing business, may detain an individual if they reasonably believe that the individual committed, or attempted to commit, theft by taking or theft of services. Weight inspectors with the motor carrier compliance division of the Department of Public Safety when needed for purposes of his or her duties, and licensed or registered private detective or private security businesses when conducting their business, may detain individuals. Any of these private persons who detain an individual is to either release the individual or contact law enforcement within a reasonable time. Any individual detained by these private persons who is not released will be surrendered to a law enforcement officer along with any personal belongings removed from the individual.

Effective May 10, 2021

House Bill 509 – Insurance Rates by Rep. Houston Gaines (R-Athens) requires every insurer delivering comprehensive individual major medical health insurance policies in Georgia to make at least one reasonably priced comprehensive major medical health insurance policy available to residents in the insurer's approved services areas of Georgia. Insurers will not exclude, limit, or deny coverage under such policy due to one or more preexisting medical conditions. This bill is contingent on a federal law or United States Supreme Court decision that repeals the 'Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act'.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 567 – Newborn Screening and Genetics Advisory Committee by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) authorizes the Department of Public Health (DPH) to promulgate rules and regulations creating a newborn screening system for the prevention of serious illness, severe physical or developmental disability, and death caused by inherited metabolic and genetic disorders. Additionally, this bill establishes the Newborn Screening and Genetics Advisory Committee that consists of no less than 11, nor more than 21 members, appointed by the DPH commissioner. This committee will consider and make recommendations to the commissioner related to the inclusion of screening for any disorder added to the federal recommended uniform screening panel within one year of an addition. As part of such recommendations, the advisory committee will advise the commissioner on the estimated cost to DPH for screening for new disorders. Furthermore, this bill adds a 30-day timeline for health care providers, facilities, and

pharmacies to provide access to the Maternal Mortality Review Committee to medical records associated with cases under review.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 591 – Emergency Medical Services by Family Therapists by Rep. Don Hogan (R-St. Simon’s Island) authorizes licensed marriage and family therapists to admit individuals for involuntary evaluation of mental or substance use disorders. Additionally, this bill requires emergency receiving facilities to report a variety of de-identified and aggregated data related to 1013s to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities.

No later than February 15, 2023, and annually thereafter during each legislative session, the department will prepare a report to the General Assembly, the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House. The report will include the following data from the previous calendar year received from each emergency receiving facility.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 617 – Compensation for Student Athletes by Rep. Chuck Martin (R-Alpharetta) allows student athletes to receive compensation for the use of the athlete’s name, image, or likeness as long as such compensation is not in exchange to attend, participate, or perform at a particular postsecondary education institution. HB 617 requires the postsecondary institution to provide a financial literacy and life skills workshop at the beginning of the student's first and third academic years.

House Bill 617 allows team contracts to provide for pooling up to 75 percent of the student athlete’s compensation for their name, image, or likeness for the benefit of student athletes previously enrolled at the same institution. This legislation will remain in effect until a federal law is passed relating to student athlete compensation; rules, polices, or regulations are adopted pertaining to such compensation; or until June 30, 2025, at which time this legislation stands repealed.

Effective July 1, 2021

House Bill 653 – Georgia Pharmacy Practice Act by Rep. Rick Jasperse (R-Jasper) expands the definition of “pharmacy care” by including the ordering and administering of tests that have been cleared or approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration, such as viral and serology COVID-19 tests. A pharmacist conducting these tests will only do so at a pharmacy or other facility that is approved under a certificate of waiver from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Effective July 1, 2021

SENATE LEGISLATION THAT PASSED

A bill can originate in either chamber; however, the bill must pass both the Senate and House in order to advance to the Governor for signature. The following bills originated in the Senate and have passed both chambers.

Senate Bill 4 – Drug Abuse Treatment and Education Programs by Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick (R-Marietta) creates several provisions related to the prohibition of patient brokering in the substance use disorder treatment field. This bill prohibits any persons or treatment providers from unlawfully paying, offering, soliciting, or receiving to pay any remuneration, as defined in this bill, for the acceptance or referral of a patient.

Additionally, this bill amends Code Section 33-1-16 by adding that a person commits a fraudulent insurance act if there is intent to defraud by billing for excessive, fraudulent, or high-tech drug testing in the treatment of the elderly, the disabled, or any individual affected by pain or substance use disorder. The commissioner of insurance will have the powers and duties to investigate any suspicion of fraudulent insurance activity.

Effective July 1, 2021

Senate Bill 5 – Patient Protections for Conscious Sedation by Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick (R-Marietta) requires individuals to have a dentistry license to administer conscious sedation in a dental facility or medspa. A medspa is a facility that offers a range of services for the purpose of improving an individual's well-being or appearance, such as liposuction or laser procedures. This bill does not apply to physicians and does not expand the scope of the practice of dentistry.

This bill does not prohibit certified registered nurse anesthetists from administering conscious sedation if the sedation is administered under the supervision of a dentist. This provision also applies to licensed physician assistants who have completed the anesthesiologist assistant program approved by the Georgia Composite Medical Board and administer such sedation under the supervision of an anesthesiologist.

Effective July 1, 2021

Senate Bill 32 – Public Disclosures by Sen. Matt Brass (R-Newnan) amends the ‘Georgia Open Records Act’ to provide that records of public employees that reveal the employee’s personal mobile or wireless telephone number are exempt from public disclosure and to clarify that employees of the federal government are “public employees.”

The bill also provides that publicly available rosters of licensees maintained by division directors of professional licensing boards shall not include a licensee’s home address. Home address information of any applicant is also included as confidential information.

Effective May 6, 2021

Senate Bill 33 – Human Trafficking by Sen. Clint Dixon (R-Gwinnett) establishes a civil cause of action for victims of human trafficking against their perpetrators. “Perpetrator” is defined as any person or entity that knowingly benefited from participation in a venture or scheme that they knew, or should have known, was in violation of the human trafficking statute.

Any civil action filed pursuant to this provision shall be stayed during the pendency of any criminal action relating to the victim. Victims may bring a civil action within 10 years after the cause of action arose or within 10 years after the victim reaches the age of 18, if the victim was a minor at the time of the alleged violation.

The attorney general shall have a cause of action against a perpetrator on behalf of the state whenever he or she has reasonable cause to believe that an interest of the citizens of the state has been threatened or adversely affected by the perpetrator.

Effective July 1, 2021

Senate Bill 34 – Human Trafficking by Sen. Clint Dixon (R-Gwinnett) amends Chapter 12 of Title 19, related to petitions for name change by victims of family violence, to include victims of human trafficking as petitioners who may request a name change under seal.

Effective July 1, 2021

Senate Bill 43 – Noncovered Eye Care Services Act by Sen. Matt Brass (R-Newnan) prohibits insurers from requiring an ophthalmologist or optometrist to accept as payment an amount set by the insurer for services that are not covered eye care services under the covered person’s eye care benefit plan as a condition to join or participate in its provider network.

Additionally, no insurer will draft, publish, disseminate, or circulate any explanations of benefit forms that include language that directly or indirectly states or implies that an ophthalmologist or optometrist should extend discounts to patients for non-covered eye care services.

Effective July 1, 2021

Senate Bill 46 – Vaccine Administration by Sen. Dean Burke (R-Bainbridge) allows emergency medical technicians and cardiac technicians to administer vaccines during a declared public health emergency upon the order of a duly licensed physician. Additionally, this bill defines “Georgia Registry of Immunization Transactions and Services” or “vaccination registry” as the vaccination registry established by the Department of Public Health.

The definition of “vaccine” is expanded to include vaccines on the adult immunization schedule recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention administered to an individual 18 years of age or older; an influenza vaccine administered to an individual 13 years of age or older; and any vaccine for an illness that has resulted in a public health emergency.

Additionally, this bill requires firefighters to submit to random drug testing at least biannually for the first two years of being licensed or certified. The Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council is responsible for establishing rules and regulations for the collection and testing of firefighters. Should a test reveal the presence of drugs, the sample must be tested by a different method to confirm that positive test.

The legislation also amends Code relating to the certification of emergency medical services personnel, paramedics, and cardiac technicians by not disqualifying applicants who have been convicted of a felony more than five years prior, but less than 10 years prior, as long as they have completed required training approved by the Department of Public Health and sponsored by the Department of Corrections, as well as met all other requirements set forth in statute.

Furthermore, this bill authorizes the Department of Public Health to release de-identified data related to the Low Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) Oil Patient Registry to government entities and others for statistical, research, educational, instructional, drug abuse prevention, or grant

application purposes after removing all personal identifiers or any other information that could be used to identify prescribers.

Effective May 10, 2021

Senate Bill 60 - Georgia State Indemnification Fund by Sen. Bruce Thompson (R-White) requires indemnification payments to be made to a public safety officer who suffers a heart attack, stroke, or vascular rupture while the officer was performing work-related activity and directly or proximately resulted in the death or partial or permanent disability.

Effective July 1, 2021

Senate Bill 80 – Prior Authorization Act by Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick (R-Marietta) amends Chapter 46 of Title 33 for private review agents that conduct health care service utilization review. The bill applies review and adjudication standards for prior authorization requests for health care services, recognizes “utilization review entities,” and sets out guidelines for the insurance commissioner’s rulemaking in enforcing standards that apply to entities conducting utilization review.

Effective January 1, 2022

Senate Bill 85 – Max Gruver Act by Sen. John Albers (R-Roswell) expands the definition of “hazing” to include coercing a student using social or physical pressure to consume any food, liquid, alcohol, drug, or other substance that would subject the student to a likely risk of vomiting, intoxication, or unconsciousness. The definition of “school organization” is also expanded to include associations, corporations, orders, or athletic teams that have students or alumni as its principal members. Further, the definition of “student” is revised to include prospectively enrolled students in Georgia schools. It remains unlawful for any person to haze a student in connection with gaining acceptance to a membership, office, or other status in a school organization, and the penalty for the crime remains a high and aggravated misdemeanor.

The bill requires applicable colleges to establish policies by July 1, 2021, that provide for reporting, investigation, and adjudication of incidents of alleged hazing between students and student organizations. Adjudications of hazing, or hazing-related convictions, will be made publicly available within 15 days from the final adjudication. The required reporting includes the name of the school organization that was involved; the date of the hazing incident; and a description of the findings, sanctions, adjudications, and convictions for any person or school organization. The information is required to be posted prominently on the school’s website for at least five years, although personal identifying information of an individual student is exempted from the public disclosure requirement.

Effective July 1, 2021

Senate Bill 187 – HOPE Scholarship by Sen. Lindsey Tippens (R-Marietta) allows the Georgia Student Finance Commission to waive certain eligibility requirements for the HOPE scholarship for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities may apply to waive the time limits on a student’s eligibility to use the scholarship after graduating high school.

Effective July 1, 2021

Senate Bill 202 – Election Reform by Sen. Max Burns (R-Sylvania) revised Georgia election laws and makes the following changes:

Section 1: Establishes the legislation as the ‘Election Integrity Act of 2021.’

Section 2: Provides an overview of the General Assembly’s reasoning and intent regarding election legislation.

Section 3: Revises the definition of “superintendent” as it relates to the State Election Board.

Section 4: Authorizes the attorney general to establish a telephone hotline for electors to submit complaints and allegations of voter intimidation and illegal election activities. The attorney general must review each complaint and allegation as expeditiously as possible to determine if further action is needed.

Section 5: Establishes that the non-partisan chairperson of the State Election Board is to be elected by the General Assembly through a joint resolution. The secretary of state shall be ex-officio, non-voting member of the State Election Board.

Section 6: Authorizes the State Election Board to suspend a county or municipal election superintendent and appoint a temporary replacement. No more than four county or municipal superintendents can be suspended at the same time. Requires the secretary of state to provide necessary support and assistance at the request of the State Election Board.

Section 7: Establishes the process required for the State Election Board, on its own motion or upon petition by the governing authority of a county or municipality, to suspend, replace, or reinstate county or municipal election superintendents.

Section 8: Permits the State Election Board to adopt emergency rules only in circumstances of imminent peril to public health, safety, or welfare and subject to specified notice requirements. Requires the State Election Board, the secretary of state, or their designees to notify the General Assembly’s Committees on Judiciary prior to entering into any relevant consent agreements, settlements, or consent orders.

Section 9: Prohibits election superintendents from accepting any funds from any source other than a county, municipal, state, or federal governing authority. Requires the State Election Board, by October 1, 2021, to submit a report to the General Assembly on a proposed method for accepting and distributing donations statewide.

Section 10: Provides for the appointment of an acting election superintendent, in counties without a board of elections, when there is a vacancy or incapacitation in the office of judge of the probate court.

Section 11: Permits a poll officer to serve in a county that adjoins the county of their residence, when specified conditions are met.

Section 12: Permits a local governing authority or the applicable members of the General Assembly to request a performance review of local election officials to be conducted by an independent performance review board at the direction of the State Election Board.

Section 13: Provides guidelines in the event of the death of a candidate on the ballot in a non-partisan election.

Section 14: Prohibits boards of registrars from accepting any funds from any source other than a county, municipal, state, or federal governing authority.

Sections 15 and 16: Establishes that there is not a limit on the number of persons whose qualifications an elector can challenge, as it relates to persons registering to vote, electors on the list of electors, and electors voting in an election.

Section 17: Authorizes the secretary of state to obtain voter information from a specified non-governmental entity on a regular basis in order to conduct list maintenance of the eligible elector list.

Section 18: For a precinct with more than 2,000 electors, if the voting wait time was more than one hour for the previous general election, the superintendent must either reduce the size of the precinct to less than 2,000 electors or provide additional poll workers or equipment, or both, before the next general election.

Section 19: Requires notice to be posted during the seven days before and on the day of the first election following a change to a polling location.

Section 20: Specifies that buses and readily movable facilities, used to supplement polling place capacity, shall only be used in governor-declared emergency situations.

Sections 20A, 20B, and 20C: Requires that the name and designation of the precinct that the ballot is prepared for be printed at the top of specified election ballots.

Section 21: Clarifies when a candidate in a non-partisan election is duly elected.

Sections 21A and 21B: Requires that the name and designation of the precinct that the ballot is prepared for be printed at the top of specified election ballots.

Section 22: Clarifies that in any election other than a statewide general election, the election superintendent may provide more or less voting booths per precinct than the general election standard of one voting booth per every 250 electors, depending on relevant factors.

Section 23: Requires ballots, with exceptions, to be printed on security paper.

Section 23 A: Requires that the name and designation of the precinct that the ballot is prepared for be printed at the top of specified election ballots.

Section 24: Provides requirements for the public notice of the time and place of voting equipment testing.

Section 25: Allows an elector to apply for an absentee ballot beginning 78 days prior to the election until 11 days prior to the election. Requires absentee ballot applications to be received by the board of registrars or an absentee ballot clerk no later than 11 days prior to the election.

Requires the submission of identifying information, including a driver's license or identification card number, when applying for an absentee ballot. If the applicant does not have a driver's license or identification card, a photocopy of an approved form of identification must be submitted with the application. The absentee ballot application must also include an oath for the elector or relative submitting the application to sign.

Prohibits the secretary of state, election superintendents, boards of registrars, or other governmental entities from sending unsolicited absentee ballot applications to electors. The bill prohibits any unauthorized person from sending an absentee ballot application with prefilled personal information to an elector. Other than specified exceptions, no person may handle or return an elector's completed absentee ballot application. Handling of a completed absentee ballot application by an unauthorized person is a misdemeanor.

If an absentee ballot application is sent to an elector by a non-governmental person or entity, the following guidelines must be followed: the application must be the same form as the one made available by the secretary of state; the name of the person or entity sending the application must be clearly disclosed on the face of the application; and a disclaimer that the person or entity is not a governmental entity, and the application is not a ballot.

Electors in jails or detention centers who are eligible to vote must be granted access to any pertinent personal effects needed to apply for and vote via an absentee ballot.

Prohibits non-governmental entities from sending absentee ballot applications to individuals who have already requested, received, or voted via an absentee ballot. A person or entity who violates this prohibition will be subject to sanctions by the State Election Board.

In instances where the identifying information submitted with the absentee ballot application does not match the elector's identifying information on file with the board of registrars, a provisional absentee ballot will be sent to the applicant, along with information on how to cure the discrepancy. If the application is incomplete or the oath is unsigned, the registrar or clerk must promptly contact the applicant in writing to request the additional information or the signed oath.

Section 26: Requires that additional registrar's offices or places of registration to receive absentee ballots or conduct advance voting must be located in a building.

Requires boards of registrars and absentee ballot clerks to establish at least one absentee ballot drop box. Additional drop boxes are permitted, subject to limitations, and must be evenly geographically distributed by population in the county. Absentee ballot drop boxes must be located at the office of the board of registrars or absentee ballot clerk or inside advance voting locations. The drop boxes may be located outside such locations during a governor-declared emergency, under specified circumstances. The drop boxes will be available for ballot drop-off during the hours of advance voting. The bill provides guidelines for the security, construction, and ballot collection process for the drop boxes.

Section 27: Requires boards of registrars or absentee ballot clerks to mail or issue official absentee ballots to all eligible applicants between 29 days and 25 days prior to a non-municipal election. Official absentee ballots must be issued to electors entitled to vote absentee under the federal

'Uniformed and Overseas Citizen Absentee Voting Act' (UOCAVA) between 49 days and 45 days prior to a federal primary or election.

During the advance voting period, boards of registrars or absentee ballot clerks must issue an absentee ballot, provisional absentee ballot, or notice of rejection within three days of receipt of the absentee ballot application. An elector confined to a hospital may apply for an absentee ballot on the day of the primary or election or during the 10-day period prior to the primary or election. These applications must be immediately processed and, if approved, the ballot must be delivered to the elector.

The envelope that an elector uses to return a completed absentee ballot must include the following: the elector's name and signature; the elector's driver's license or identification card number; a space for the elector to mark if they do not have a driver's license or identification card; the elector's date of birth; and the last four digits of the elector's social security number, if the elector does not include the driver's license or identification card number. These identifying pieces of information should be concealed when the envelope is correctly sealed. Any unauthorized person who knowingly unseals an absentee ballot envelope shall be guilty of a felony.

The uniform instructions provided with the absentee ballot must include the following: specific instructions that the elector must mark the ballot in private and will not allow any unauthorized person to deliver or return the ballot on their behalf as well as an oath, under penalty of false swearing, affirming such; a list of persons authorized to return a completed ballot to the board of registrars on behalf of the elector; and the contact information of the State Election Board.

Absentee electors on the master list of electors who have been sent absentee ballots may be challenged by any elector prior to 5:00 p.m. on the day before election officials begin scanning and tabulating absentee ballots.

A special absentee run-off ballot must be included with each general primary or general election absentee ballot that is sent to Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voters. The special absentee run-off ballot will allow the UOCAVA elector to cast their vote for a runoff by indicating their order of preference for each candidate in each race. The elector will rank each candidate beginning with "1," then "2," and so forth until the elector has ranked each candidate that he or she chooses to rank.

Section 28: Requires the outer oath envelope of the absentee ballot to include a space for the elector to provide his or her driver's license or identification card number and his or her date of birth. If the elector does not have a driver's license or identification card, the elector must provide the last four digits of his or her social security number. If none of the above can be provided, the elector must include a copy of an approved form of identification.

The advance voting period must begin on the fourth Monday immediately prior to each primary or election and as soon as possible prior to a runoff. Advance voting hours must begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 5:00 p.m. on weekdays and, when applicable, Saturdays. Advance voting must be conducted on the second and third Saturdays of the advance voting period. The registrar or absentee ballot clerk may choose to hold advance voting on the second or third Sunday, or both the second and third Sunday, prior to a primary or election. The Sunday advance voting hours are determined by the registrar or absentee ballot clerk, but no longer than 7:00 a.m. through 7:00 p.m.

Registrars may extend the early voting hours to permit voting from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. Advance voting is only permitted to occur on the days specified in Code and cannot be conducted on any other days.

The board of registrars must publish the dates, times, and locations of advance voting at least 14 days prior to the advance voting period for a primary or election and at least seven days prior to the advance voting period for a runoff. Once published, the board of registrars are prohibited from removing an advance voting location unless an emergency occurs.

On each business day of the absentee voting period, the county board of registrars or absentee ballot clerk must report to the secretary of state and post the following information: the numbers of absentee ballots that have been issued, returned, and rejected.

On each business day of the advance voting period, the county board of registrars or absentee ballot clerk must report to the secretary of state and post the following information: the number of persons who have voted at advance voting sites in the county or municipality.

On each business day of the absentee voting period and for a period of three days following the election, the county board of registrars or absentee ballot clerk must report to the secretary of state and post the following information: the numbers of provisional ballots that have been voted, verified, cured and accepted for counting, and rejected.

Section 29: Upon receipt of an absentee ballot, the registrar or clerk must compare the identifying information provided by the elector with the same information contained in the elector's voter registration records and verify that the elector's oath has been signed. If the elector did not sign the oath or their provided identifying information does not match the information in the elector's voter registration records, the ballot will be rejected, and the elector will be given the opportunity to cure the problem that resulted in the rejection.

The election superintendent is authorized to process, and scan verified and accepted absentee ballots beginning at 8:00 a.m. on the third Monday prior to the day of the primary, election, or runoff. It is prohibited, unless otherwise provided in Code, to tabulate or tally in any way the absentee ballot votes until the closing of the polls on the day of the election. At least seven days prior to processing and scanning the absentee ballots, the superintendent must provide written notice to the secretary of state as well as post the notice in the superintendent's office and on the county election superintendent's website, if applicable. The secretary of state must post the provided notice on the secretary of state's website as well.

The processing and scanning of absentee ballots must be open to the view of the public, but only the superintendent or their employee or designee is authorized to touch the ballots or ballot container. Anyone involved in processing or scanning absentee ballots must swear an oath before beginning the process.

Political parties have the right to designate persons to act as monitors to observe the absentee ballot processing and scanning. Such monitors are prohibited from the following: interfering with the process in any way; using or bringing into the room any type of recording device; engaging in campaigning; endangering the secrecy and security of the ballots; touching the ballots or ballot

container; in any way tabulating the votes cast on the absentee ballots; communicating observed information about any ballot, vote, or selection to anyone other than an election official.

When requested by the superintendent, but not earlier than the third Monday prior to the election, a registrar or absentee ballot clerk must deliver the absentee ballots, rejected ballots, ballot applications, and the list of certified and rejected ballots to a designated location. At that location, the superintendent must ensure that the ballots are opened and tabulated.

The superintendent is required to ensure that absentee ballot returns are reported to the public as soon as possible following the closing of the polls on election day. Failure to do so subjects the superintendent to sanctions by the State Election Board and, under certain circumstances, review by an independent performance review board.

Section 30: Authorizes the secretary of state to inspect and audit absentee ballot applications or envelopes at any time during the 24-month retention period.

Section 31: Provides that poll hours at a precinct may only be extended by order of a superior court judge.

Section 32: Requires poll watchers to complete training provided by the political party or body that they are representing.

Section 33: Prohibits giving money or gifts, including food and drinks, to an elector within 150 feet of a polling place, within a polling place, or within 25 feet of a voter standing in line to vote. Permits poll officers to make available unattended, self-service water receptacles for electors standing in line to vote.

Sections 34 and 35: The provisional ballot of an elector voting in the wrong precinct will only be counted if the ballot was cast after 5:00 p.m. and the elector signed a sworn statement.

Section 36: After polls have closed on election day, poll officials must report the following information to the election superintendent: the total number of ballots cast at the precinct and the total number of provisional ballots cast at the precinct. The chief manager and at least one assistance manager must immediately deliver ballots and election materials to the election superintendent or the counting and tabulating center. The election superintendent must ensure that all ballots are processed, counted, and tabulated as soon as possible and such counting and tabulation must not be stopped until all votes are counted. The superintendent must post the reported information publicly.

Requires the election superintendent, before 10:00 p.m. on election day, to report to the secretary of state and post in a prominent location specified information regarding the number of ballots cast on election day, the number of ballots cast during advance voting, and the number of returned absentee ballots. Once all votes have been counted, the previously reported totals must be compared with the total number of ballots cast and reported to the secretary of state.

Section 37: Removes a provision allowing poll officers to stop canvassing the votes in order to resume the following day. Clarifies when votes for candidates who have died or been disqualified will or will not be counted.

Section 38: Clarifies when votes for candidates who have died or been disqualified will or will not be counted.

Sections 38A and 38B: Requires that the name and designation of the precinct that the ballot is prepared for be printed at the top of specified election ballots.

Section 39: Establishes the creation of duplication panels to prepare duplicate copies of ballots when necessary. The duplication panel must consist of an election superintendent, or their designee, and two other members, as specified based on the type of election.

Section 40: Computation and canvassing of votes must take place following the close of the polls on election day.

Section 41: The superintendent must publicly commence the computation and canvassing of returns after the close of the polls on election day and continue until all absentee ballots received by the close of the polls have been counted and tabulated. Requires the secretary of state to create a pilot program for posting the digital images of scanned paper ballots. Election returns must be certified by the superintendent by 5:00 p.m. on the Monday following election day.

Section 42: When a runoff is necessary, it must be held on the 28th day after the general or special primary or general or special election.

Section 43: Special primaries and special elections held at the same time as a general primary must be conducted using the same machines and facilities as the general primary, when possible. If a vacancy occurs in a partisan office to which the governor is authorized to appoint an individual to serve until the next general election, a special primary must precede the special election. The names of candidates on the ballot in a special primary must be listed alphabetically.

Section 44: When applicable, the candidates and questions on the ballot for a special primary or special election must be included on the ballot for a general primary or general election, if the registration deadlines are the same for both elections.

Section 45: In order to fill a vacancy for an unexpired term of a United States senator, a special primary must be held at the same time as the general primary, followed by a special election held at the same time as the general election.

Section 46: A vacancy in the office of specified judges must be filled by the governor's appointment until a successor is duly elected.

Section 47: Specifies that a person shall be guilty of a felony if they, without proper authorization, accept an absentee ballot from an elector for delivery or return to the board of registrars.

Section 48: Makes it a felony for an unauthorized person to intentionally observe an elector while casting a ballot in order to see how the elector voted. Makes it a misdemeanor to photograph or record a voted ballot.

Section 49: If the decennial census results are published within 120 days of the next general or special municipal election, the reapportionment of municipal election districts shall be effective for any subsequent special or general municipal election.

Section 50: When the State Election Board adopts an emergency rule relative to a state of emergency, the rule must be submitted to the General Assembly no later than 20 days prior to the rule taking effect. Any emergency rule adopted by the State Election Board may be suspended upon the majority vote of the Judiciary committees of the House of Representatives or Senate.

Section 51: Requires scanned ballot images created by a voting system to be public records that are subject to disclosure.

Effective March 25, 2021

Senate Bill 215 – Certified Medication Aids by Sen. Larry Walker III (R-Perry) allows for nursing homes to use certified medication aides to administer physician-ordered oral, ophthalmic, topical, otic, nasal, vaginal, and rectal medications; insulin, epinephrine, and B12; medications via an inhaler; blood glucose testing; disposable enema; and self-administration medications. Nursing homes using certified nursing aides must also have a licensed pharmacist perform quarterly reviews of each nursing home resident’s drug regimen, properly dispose of any expired or discontinued drugs, and establish and monitor compliance of medication policies and procedures.

The bill specifies that certified medication aides cannot administer any Schedule II narcotics. Additionally, SB 215 requires the Department of Community Health to approve employer-based certified nurse aid training and competency examination programs sponsored by or offered in assisted living communities, private home care providers, personal care homes, or other long-term care facilities licensed by the department.

Effective May 4, 2021

LEGISLATION THAT DID NOT PASS

This list of legislation includes several bills that failed to pass during the 2021 legislative session. We included these bills because they can still be considered next year since this is the first year in a two-year biennium. Emory OGCA will continue to monitor these issues moving forward.

House Bill 247 – Distracted Driving Update by Rep. John Carson (R-Marietta) would have removed a provision of the distracted driving law that allowed a first-time offender with a violation to provide proof to the judge that a hands-free device was purchased to comply with the law in order to be found not guilty.

House Bill 290 – Hospital Visitation by Rep. Ed Setzler (R-Acworth) would have required hospitals and long-term care settings to allow a legal representative to visit an inpatient daily even during a public health emergency. Exceptions would not have been made for any situation including, infectious disease, security threats, or natural disasters.

House Bill 291 – Tuition Equalization Grants by Rep. Katie Dempsey (R-Rome) would have expanded eligibility to receive tuition equalization grants to include higher education institutions

with a current physical presence in Georgia for at least five years, accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, and accreditation from either the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or a regional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. These institutions must also have a four-year average passage rate of at least 85 percent for the National Council Licensure Examination and admit students who have a high school diploma, GED diploma, or a degree from an accredited postsecondary institution. Eligible institutions do not include Bible schools or colleges, or graduate schools or colleges of theology or divinity.

House Bill 369 – Georgia Composite Medical Board by Rep. Alan Powell (R-Hartwell) would have expanded the eligibility as to who can issue an affidavit to authorize a motor vehicle disability parking permit by including advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants. The bill would have allowed advanced practice registered nurses to authorize limited Scheduled II prescriptions so long as it is pursuant to a nurse protocol agreement and meets the other listed requirements. Further, the bill would have allowed physicians to delegate the authority to issue prescription drug orders in emergency situations under specific requirements.

House Bill 450 – Data on Low THC Oil Patient Registry by Rep. Mark Newton (R-Augusta) would have authorized the Department of Public Health to release de-identified data related to the Low Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) Oil Patient Registry to government entities and others for statistical, research, educational, instructional, drug abuse prevention, or grant application purposes after removing all personal identifiers or any other information that could be used to identify prescribers.

House Bill 539 – Tort Reform Trial Bifurcation by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) would have provided for separate trials for issues of liability and damages in actions for medical malpractice.

House Bill 605 – Electronic Monitoring in Long-Term Health Care Facilities by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) would have allowed for the use of authorized electronic monitoring devices in any skilled nursing facility, intermediate care home, assisted living community, or personal care home.

House Bill 697 - Patient Protection Through Health Information Exchange Act by Rep. Mark Newton (R-Augusta) would have amended the list of information from health care providers that must be reported annually to the Department of Community Health. A hospital or a hospital's electronic health records vendor would have been required to report the current status of implementing or using meaningful electronic health records user standards, interoperability standards, and certified electronic health records technology standards. This reporting requirement would not apply to any hospital with a primary campus in a rural county with a population of 50,000 or less. Additionally, the bill would have required hospitals or each hospital's electronic health records vendor to complete a survey by October 1, 2021 regarding whether the hospital uses or has barriers to using electronic health records, interoperability of health information, and certified health records technology as well as whether the hospital has a timeline for using electronic health records.

House Resolution 236 – House Study Committee on Safe Staffing of Nurses by Rep. Jodi Lott (R-Evans) would have undertaken a study to examine best practices for the safe staffing of nurses

in a practice environment to provide recommendations for the implementation of a standard of safe staffing for nurses in Georgia.

Senate Bill 45 – License by Endorsement by Sen. Bruce Thompson (R-White) would have allowed individuals who move to the state and establish residency to obtain a license by endorsement to practice certain professions and occupations in this state.

Senate Bill 82 – Emergency Medical Services Prudent Layperson Standard by Sen. Michelle Au (D-Johns Creek) would have amended Chapter 11 of Title 31 related to emergency medical services to clarify that the “prudent layperson standard” is not affected by the diagnosis given.

Senate Bill 97 – Out-of-state Tuition Waivers by Sen. Lester Jackson (D-Savannah) would have authorized institutions of the University System of Georgia (USG) to award out-of-state tuition differential waivers and assess in-state-tuition for certain individuals. It would also have allowed Historically Black Colleges and Universities within USG to award these differential waivers up to 4% of the equivalent full-time students enrolled in the fall term.

Senate Resolution 154 - Joint Study Committee for Strengthening Georgia’s Future Workforce by Sen. Nan Orrock (D-Atlanta) would have consisted of 17 members would have been tasked with evaluating and addressing whether a needs-based scholarship is necessary to continue growing Georgia’s economy and workforce.