



HEALTHY MOTHERS, HEALTHY BABIES
Coalition of Georgia

Keeping Current @ the Capitol March 30, 2009

Legislators have completed 37 of 40 legislative days. Monday, March 30th will be the 38th legislative day. House and Senate leaders have scheduled the last two days of the session for Wednesday and Friday of this week. Much work remains to be done, however, on major issues such as funding for trauma care and the reorganization of DHR. The Senate Appropriations Committee will pass their version of the FY 2010 budget on Monday and the full Senate is expected to vote on the budget on Wednesday. This will leave very little time for the House and Senate to reach agreement on the FY 2010 budget. Legislators may not be able to finish their work as planned on Friday, April 3rd.

Advocates remain concerned about Georgia's budget situation and the ability of the state to meet the needs of its citizens. Revenue numbers continue to decline, and the federal stimulus money is a one-time event. Unemployment numbers are rising and as a result, more people are turning to public programs for assistance. Medicaid enrollment will most certainly increase.

Gov. Perdue and legislators have used part of the rainy day fund and stimulus funds to fill some budget gaps, but only temporarily. Many advocates support the tobacco tax as one way of increasing state revenue, but unfortunately, HB 39 remains stalled in committee.

PROPOSED LEGISLATION

DHR REORGANIZATION

HB 228 (Rep. Mark Butler, 18th) would reorganize and restructure the Departments of Human Resources and Community Health. *Status: Has passed House & Senate. House and Senate versions differ on whether Public Health should be placed with Mental Health or the Department of Community Health. Senate version also placed Developmental Disabilities with Mental Health while House version left DD with DHR. House and Senate Conference Committee has been appointed and is working to reach agreement.*

TRAUMA CARE FUNDING

Last week the Senate passed **HB 160** (Rep. Jim Cole, 125th) the Governor's "super speeder" bill, which is expected to generate \$23 million for trauma care in FY 2010. This amount is a first step, but far from the amount needed to stabilize existing trauma systems and begin to build the expand system that is needed. **SR 277** (Sen. Greg Goggans, 7th), a proposed

constitutional amendment that would dedicate funds from a \$10 fee on car tags for trauma care, passed House Ways & Means last week and is in House Rules.

POTENTIAL THREAT TO MEDICAID AND PEACHCARE

SB 92 (Sen. Judson Hill, 32nd) seeks to implement a “premium assistance” program in Georgia’s existing Medicaid and PeachCare programs. The state would pay premiums to enroll members in commercial health plans such as employer sponsored health plans. *Status: Passed by Senate Insurance & Labor on. No vote in Senate by 30th day, dead unless attached to other legislation.*

HB 39 (Rep. Ron Stephens, 164th) would increase tobacco tax by \$1 per pack of cigarettes and generate an estimated \$335 million in new revenue. The increased price for a pack of cigarettes would also be a major deterrent to teen smoking. *Status: did not pass out of House Ways & Means.*

HB 229 (Rep. Brooks Coleman, 97th) would create the SHAPE (Student Health and Physical Education) Act. Beginning in 2011-12, students in grades 1-12 enrolled in physical education would have an annual fitness assessment approved by the State Board of Education. *Status: Passed House & Senate. Sent to Gov. for signature.*

HB 736 (Rep. Ron Stephens, 164th) would require public schools to provide parents or guardians of sixth grade female students information concerning the infection of and the immunization against the human papillomavirus. *Status: Assigned to House Health & Human Services.*

SB 182 (Sen. Judson Hill, 32nd) would extend COBRA benefits from 3 to 9 months for unemployed workers from companies with less than 20 employees, using federal stimulus subsidies. Workers laid off from larger companies after September 1, 2008 are already eligible, but a change in Georgia law is required to allow workers from smaller companies to also be eligible. **UPDATE:** *HB 182 did not pass the Senate by crossover day, but attempts are being made to include the language in another bill that is moving.*

SB 223 (Sen. Renee Unterman, 45th) would create a Women’s Reproductive Health Legislative Oversight Committee. The purpose would be to review and evaluate all women’s reproductive health programs and services, including family planning, teen pregnancy prevention, and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. The committee would consist entirely of legislators. *Status: Passed Senate. Assigned to House Judiciary.*

SB 69 (Sen. Renee Unterman, 45th) expands the definition of child abuse to include sexual exploitation by any person who allows, permits, encourages or requires a child to engage in prostitution or any sexually explicit product. Also expands the mandate for reporting child abuse beyond the responsibility of the parent or caretaker to include any person. **UPDATE:** *Passed House and Senate. Sent to Governor for signature.*

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Feedback, questions, or concerns can be directed to the HMHB Public Affairs Committee, c/o Merrilee Gober, Chair at magober@bellsouth.net

