



## *Final Legislative Update 2022*

### **GRA Legislative Agenda Items**

**Truck Size and Weight:** Oppose any legislation that increases the allowable size and weight of truck carrying freight. Typically, advocates seek to revise O.C.G.A. 32-6-26 (g) (1), which allows for a weight increase and various radius distance increases for forest products, live poultry, cotton, feed, granite, raw ore or minerals, solid waste concrete or poultry.

Working with coalition partners, this year GRA defeated attempts to permanently increase allowable truck weights in Georgia. [House Bill 496](#) by Representative James Burchett (R-Waycross) would allow vehicles hauling raw forest products, agricultural commodities, and minerals to reach a total gross weight of up to 95,000 pounds—this measure did not pass out of the House.

**Blocked Crossing:** Oppose any bills that would prevent a railroad common carrier from authorizing the operation of a train that causes a road to be blocked for longer than 15 minutes. There were a number of bills and resolutions in play this session which would address train length and blocked crossings—none of these measures were passed.

GRA opposed [House Resolution 1023](#), by Representative Jasmine Clark (D-Lilburn), which would urge the Federal Railroad Administration to take action to regulate the blocking of railroad crossings. This measure was not passed.

GRA also opposed [House Resolution 1027](#), also by Representative Jasmine Clark, which would create the House Study Committee on Railroad Crossing Blockages to “determine what can be done legislatively or through railroad company policy to reduce the impacts railroad grade crossing blockages have upon local communities and public safety.” This measure also did not pass.

[House Bill 1473](#) by Representative James Burchett (R-Waycross) would prohibit a train from blocking a crossing for more than 15 minutes unless the train is stopped due to the mechanical failure of the train; necessary to avoid striking an object or person on the track; due to a derailment or other accident; or in order to comply with federal safety regulations. The bill would also impose a penalty of \$500 for every five minutes a stopped train causes a road to be blocked beyond 15 minutes. This bill did not pass.

We were also in opposition to [House Resolution 919](#) by Representative Rick Williams (R-Milledgeville), which would urge the Federal Railroad Administration to follow through with efforts to regulate train length. The measure did not make it to Governor Kemp’s desk.

**Short Line Tax Credit:** Last session the legislature passed Senate Bill 6, which included an extension of the short line tax credit from the end of 2023 to the end of 2026. The original version of [House Bill 1039](#),

authored by Representative Mack Jackson (R-Sandersville), would have extended Georgia short line tax credit two additional years through the end of 2028. However, in the final days of session, the language from the measure was replaced with language that would provide a tax credit to physicians in rural areas.

**Two Man Crew:** Oppose any legislation which would seek to require a train that is in use for the movement of freight to operate with at least two crew members. Similar legislation was introduced in the 2019 session. No legislation was introduced regarding two man crew this session.

**Georgia 811:** Oppose any legislation which would remove the Georgia 811 exemption for railroads, thereby requiring them to join Georgia 811, “call before you dig.” Georgia code currently exempts railroads from mandatory Georgia 811 membership. Any attempts to change the law to make Georgia 811 membership compulsory for railroads would be harmful to the industry, as it would slow railroads down. Language in [House Bill 1372](#) by Representative Vance Smith (R-Pine Mountain) exempts railroads from having to join Georgia 811. This measure successfully passed both chambers this session and is awaiting Governor Kemp’s signature.

**Operation Lifesaver Recognition:** On the final day of the session, the House passed a resolution by Transportation Committee Chairman Rick Jasperse (R-Jasper) which recognizes Operation Lifesaver for its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. [House Resolution 1288](#) notes that the State of Georgia is a leader in supporting highway-rail grade crossing and pedestrian safety and commends all Georgia railroad stakeholders who have supported the program in the state.

### **Overview of General Assembly**

Legislators threw confetti in the House and Senate chambers about 15 minutes after the midnight deadline on April 4 when the legislature adjourned *Sine Die*. The 2022 session was the second year of a two-year term, so any bills that did not successfully pass both chambers by the time the clock struck midnight on Tuesday night are dead and will need to be reintroduced next year. Measures that were approved by both the House and the Senate before the General Assembly wrapped up its business will be sent to Governor Kemp’s desk for his consideration.

The governor and his team now begin a 40-day bill review process, during which they will assess the legislation that was passed by the General Assembly to determine which measures Governor Kemp will sign and which measures he will veto. If the governor takes no action on a bill, the bill becomes law. Governor Kemp vetoed 14 bills after the 2019 session, four bills after the 2020 session, and just one bill after last year’s session. A governor’s veto of a bill requires a two-thirds majority of both the House and the Senate to override.

The Gold Dome has seen a number of important bipartisan pieces of legislation passed in recent years, most notably the hate crimes law during the 2020 session and the repeal of the citizen’s arrest statute in 2021. Though the 2022 session was marked by a contentious redistricting cycle and the hyper-partisan environment that naturally exists in an election year, the 2022 legislative session will undoubtedly be remembered for the successful bipartisan effort to overhaul the state’s mental healthcare system.

Compared to other states, Georgia consistently ranks near the bottom when it comes to mental healthcare access and quality, a problem that has only been exacerbated by several years of a worldwide pandemic. With lead sponsor Speaker David Ralston at the helm, a bipartisan group of legislators worked tirelessly this session with mental health advocates, state agency heads, and community partners to successfully pass legislation which will comprehensively reform the future of mental healthcare in the state.

The legislature approved dozens of measures this session, but notable measures that did *not* make it across the finish line include:

- a bill which would legalize sports betting in Georgia;
- measures that would have Georgians vote on the future of horseracing in the state;
- a measure that would have authorized businesses to grow and sell medical marijuana to qualified patients;
- a measure that would have prohibited doctors from sending the abortion pill in the mail;
- a pay raise for state legislators;
- a bill that would create the Georgia Council on Addressing Health Care Workforce Challenges;
- a bill that would increase term length for state senators; and
- a bill that would have prohibited social media platforms from censoring its conservative users, which was a Senate majority caucus priority this session.

When the clock struck midnight on April 4, it marked the end of an era—it was the last day in the legislature for a number of General Assembly members, several of whom have served under the Gold Dome with distinction for decades. ‘Dean of the House’ Calvin Smyre (D-Columbus) is leaving the legislature after 48 years of service. Smyre, who is the longest-serving member in the Georgia General Assembly, was selected by President Biden to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic. On the final day of the session, he was presented with a portrait that will hang in the hallway of the State Capitol.

Another powerful and well-respected member of the House retiring after this year is House Appropriations Chairman Terry England (R-Auburn), who has served in the House for 18 years. Across the hall in the Senate, the powerful Rules Chairman Jeff Mullis (R-Chickamauga) is retiring after serving 22 years. His announcement during qualifying week that he would not be running for reelection came as a surprise to many.

Some legislators who will not be returning next year are retiring to spend more time with their families, like Senator Lindsey Tippins (R-Marietta), who has served in the Senate for 12 years. Others, like Senate President Pro Tempore Butch Miller (R-Gainesville) and Senator Burt Jones (R-Jackson) will not be returning to their legislative seats next year because they are running for higher office—both Miller and Jones are running to replace Lieutenant Governor Geoff Duncan, who is not seeking reelection.

With a total of 51 members of the legislature opting not to run for reelection, we can expect a number of new faces under the Gold Dome next year. While House leadership is expected to remain constant in the coming session under the direction of Speaker David Ralston, it remains to be seen who will be steering the ship in the Senate. Over a dozen Republicans and Democrats have qualified to fill Lieutenant Governor Geoff Duncan’s spot in the Senate rostrum, including two Republican state senators, three Democratic state representatives, and a former member of Atlanta City Council.

The strength of the Senate relative to the House and the governor next year will depend, not only on who is elected as the next Lieutenant Governor, but also on the dynamic between the new Lieutenant Governor and Senate leadership, including the new President Pro Tempore who will be elected by fellow senators to replace the outgoing Butch Miller.

The end of the two-year term also means any legislators hoping to return next year hit the campaign trail as soon as the session ended, as have those who are seeking higher office. Sitting legislators are not permitted to fundraise during the legislative session, and any members with primary opposition have about a month and a half until the primary election on May 24.

Most of the statewide constitutional office contests have crowded fields of candidates from both parties, but all eyes will be on the governor’s race at the top of the ticket. The Republican primary will determine which Republican gubernatorial candidate will face off against Stacy Abrams in November. Governor Kemp leads David Perdue by more than 10 percent in the polls; Kemp also leads in fundraising. However, to avoid a primary runoff, Kemp will need to secure 50 percent plus one of the Republican

electorate on May 24, which could potentially prove to be a challenge with a third Republican candidate, Kandiss Taylor, also in the mix.

### **Mental Health Parity**

This session, legislators worked across the aisle to pass [House Bill 1013](#), which comprehensively reforms mental healthcare in Georgia. The lead sponsor of the measure was House Speaker David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge), who traditionally only puts his name on the budget each session. The bill was shepherded through the legislative process by Republican Representative Todd Jones (R-Cumming) and Democratic Representative Mary Margaret Oliver (D-Decatur).

Although it always seemed fairly certain that the legislation would pass in some form, after it passed the House, it was unclear the extent to which the Senate would amend major provisions of the bill—changes that the House would need to agree to before the measure could be sent to Governor Kemp. The Senate Health and Human Services Committee created a special subcommittee, which held four hours-long meetings, to review the bill and recommend changes to the full committee. The subcommittee, which was chaired by Senator Dean Burke (R-Bainbridge), also included Senator Ben Watson (R-Savannah), Senator John Kennedy (R-Macon), Senator Michelle Au (D-Johns Creek), and Senator Brian Strickland (R-McDonough), who carried the measure in the Senate.

The legislation comes from recommendations made by the Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Commission. After a number of iterations of the bill, major provisions of the final version include requiring insurance companies that already cover mental health to comply with federal mental health parity laws, the creation of a cancelable educational loan program for mental health and substance abuse professionals, and the creation of a grant program to establish assisted outpatient treatment programs.

The measure had a great deal of bipartisan support through the legislative process and support from community partners, including Piedmont Healthcare, Emory Healthcare, WellStar Health System, and the Georgia Chamber. In the final weeks of session, the Georgia Freedom Caucus came out in opposition to the measure, claiming it would “massively expand government in the style of Obamacare” and “enable back door gun-grabbing red flag laws and violate civil liberties”—claims which were quickly labeled by supporters of the bill as misinformation.

Changes made to the bill during the committee process, including the removal of references to the World Health Organization’s definition of mental illness, brought former opponents onboard to support the bill. Representative Philip Singleton (R-Sharpshurg), who spearheaded a vocal opposition to the measure earlier in the session, noted that he was content with the compromise language in the bill and ultimately voted to support the measure.

The Senate unanimously approved a substitute version of the bill on March 30, and the House unanimously approved the bill with the Senate changes on the same day. The General Assembly took a break from legislative action at 1:30 on the final day of session for Governor Kemp to hold a formal signing ceremony for the bill. Governor Kemp, Lieutenant Governor Duncan, and Speaker Ralston were flanked by dozens of bipartisan legislators, state agency heads, and mental health advocates who worked tirelessly this session to get the bill across the finish line.

### **Fiscal Year 2023 Budget**

On the final morning of session, the budget conference committee met to sign off on [House Bill 911](#), the agreed upon \$30.2 billion state budget for Fiscal Year 2023, which runs from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. The total FY23 budget is an increase of 10.8 percent over the original FY22 state budget. The House conference committee appointees were House Appropriations Chairman Terry England (R-Auburn), Speaker Pro Tempore Jan Jones (R-Milton), and Majority Leader Jon Burns (R-Newington).

The Senate was represented by Appropriations Chairman Blake Tillery (R-Vidalia), President Pro Tempore Butch Miller (R-Gainesville), and Majority Leader Mike Dugan (R-Carrollton).

For many of the key decision makers in the room, the FY23 budget was the final budget they will craft—longtime House Appropriations Chairman Terry England is retiring from the legislature. Additionally, House Budget and Research Office Director Martha Wigton and Senate Budget and Evaluation Office Director Melody DeBussey will also be leaving this year. All three budget gurus are highly respected under the Gold Dome and leave very large shoes to fill for their successors. At this point, there is no obvious frontrunner for House Appropriations Chairman for the 2023 session, but whoever the Speaker selects for the position will make him or her one of the most powerful members of the House.

The Senate unanimously approved the final version of the budget midday on Legislative Day 40. The House voted to approve the budget with an hour left on the clock by a margin of 160 to 5.

The FY23 budget includes a \$2,000 pay raise for teachers, which fulfills a campaign promise for Governor Kemp, a \$5,000 cost-of-living raise for state and university employees, and about \$120 million to increase the 401(k) match for state employees. Attracting and retaining qualified state employees was a widespread concern for state agency heads in their budget presentations to the Appropriations committees this session.

Other big-ticket items for the FY23 budget include \$382 million to restore austerity cuts made to the state's QBE funding for public schools, \$230 million to eliminate the Special Institution Fee students pay to Georgia's colleges and universities, \$168 million for the construction of a new state prison, and \$83 million in bonds to complete the renovation of the Savannah Convention Center.

Keeping in line with the legislative focus on mental health this session, the upcoming fiscal year's budget also includes funds for a 10 percent increase for core services for addictive diseases, the funding of three additional Assisted Outpatient Treatment programs, a \$4 million increase to issue value-based payments to Community Service Boards, and an increase in funds for the salaries of state psychiatric hospital nurses and health aides to address agency recruitment and retention.

### **Income Tax Cut**

House and Senate leaders came to an agreement on a state income tax reduction late on the final day of the session. The original House version of [House Bill 1437](#) by House Ways and Means Chairman Shaw Blackmon (R-Bonaire) would create a flat state income tax of 5.25 percent. When the Senate took up the measure in the final weeks of session, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Hufstetler (R-Rome) added language that would severely hamstring the state's film tax credit program by imposing a cap and prohibiting the transferability of the credit.

A conference committee appointed to resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill stripped out all of the language that would harm the film tax credit. The agreed upon version creates a flat 5.49 percent income tax, which will continue to decrease by a tenth of a percent down to 4.99 percent each year if certain revenue triggers are met. The bill eliminates the standard deduction and increases personal exemptions from \$2,700 to \$12,000 for single and head of household taxpayers and from \$7,400 to \$18,500 for married taxpayers filing a joint return.

While any specific references to the film tax credit were removed from the bill, a new provision that was added in conference committee will require the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committees to undertake a thorough review of all state tax credits, deductions, and exemptions and create a report of their findings and recommendations by December 1, 2023.

## **Divisive Concepts in Schools + Transgender Sports Bill**

In the final minutes of the session, the Senate took a vote to approve a bill that would prohibit Georgia public schools from teaching ‘divisive concepts,’ including but not limited to, the idea that the United States is fundamentally racist and the idea that one race is superior to another race. The bill, [House Bill 1084](#) by Representative Will Wade (R-Dawsonville), was the subject of several contentious Education Committee meetings in both the House and the Senate this session.

The final version of the bill, which the Senate approved in the final minutes of the legislative session, also includes language to address transgender athletes in school sports, another controversial subject this session. Last year, Senator Marty Harbin (R-Tyrone) introduced the ‘Save Girls Sports Act,’ which would require student athletes to participate in sports according to the gender on their birth certificates. Harbin’s measure never made it out of the Senate. The language added on to House Bill 1084 was decidedly weaker than the language from Harbin’s bill—the bill that passed punts the decision about how to handle transgender athletes to the Georgia High School Association and establishes a 10-member executive oversight committee to review the future of transgender students in sports in Georgia. The measure has been sent to Governor Kemp for his consideration.

## **Constitutional Carry**

After the measure received final passage from the legislature on April 1, Governor Kemp said that he is looking forward to signing the Georgia Constitutional Carry Act of 2021 into law, which was one of his legislative priorities for the session. [Senate Bill 319](#) by Senator Jason Anavitarte (R-Dallas) strikes the requirements in current law that require a permit to legally carry a firearm. It also redefines ‘carry permit holder’ as ‘lawful weapons carrier.’ To legally carry a firearm, an individual still needs to have legally purchased the firearm and needs to be in possession of the firearm legally. The measure still allows an individual to apply for a carry permit in order to legally carry a firearm in states with reciprocity.

## **Elections Reform**

After passing a comprehensive elections reform bill last session that garnered a great deal of national attention, this year the legislature passed another elections-related measure. Several standalone elections bills failed to receive final passage, but on the final day of the session some of the provisions from [House Bill 1392](#) by Representative Stan Gunter (R-Blairsville) were added on to [Senate Bill 441](#), which reestablishes the Criminal Case Data Exchange Board as an advisory board to The Council of Superior Court Clerks of Georgia.

Elections-related provisions included in the final version of the bill provides the Georgia Bureau of Investigation with original jurisdiction to identify and investigate election-related claims—but only if there is evidence that it is “sufficient enough to change or place in doubt the result of an election.” The bill now sits on Governor Kemp’s desk, awaiting his signature.

## **Unmask Georgia’s Students**

[Senate Bill 514](#), which was carried by Governor’s Floor Leader Clint Dixon (R-Buford) this session, prevents a local board of education, local school superintendent, school administrator, or teacher from requiring students to wear face masks while on school property unless parents have the option to exempt their children. The final version of the bill passed by the legislature included a June 30, 2027 sunset. The measure was a legislative priority for Governor Kemp this session, and he held a formal signing ceremony for the measure in the North Wing of the Capitol on March 29. The bill went to effect upon the governor’s signature.

## **Income Tax Refund**

This session Governor's Floor Leader Josh Bonner (R-Fayetteville) carried [House Bill 1302](#), which will return a \$1.6 billion state revenue surplus back to taxpayers in the form of an income tax refund. The bill, which was a legislative priority for Governor Kemp this session, will provide a one-time tax refund of \$250 for single tax filers and \$500 joint filers who filed tax returns in Georgia in 2020 and 2021. No further action is required on behalf of taxpayers; individuals who qualify will receive their payments after the Georgia Department of Revenue receives their 2021 state income tax returns. The bill passed by a vote of 148 to 18 in the House and 47 to 4 in the Senate. Governor Kemp has already signed the measure.

## **Vaccine Passports**

On Day 40, the House and Senate came to an agreement on legislation that will prohibit state and local governments from mandating vaccine passports. Earlier this session, the Senate voted along party lines to pass [Senate Bill 345](#) by Senate Rules Chairman Jeff Mullis (R-Chickamauga). A substitute version of the bill passed by the Senate clarified that the bill will not affect the federally mandated COVID-19 vaccine requirements for healthcare workers. The House passed an amended version of the bill and immediately sent it back over to the Senate for consideration in the final days of the session. On Legislative Day 40, the Senate voted to agree with the House version of the bill and sent it to the governor's desk for his signature.

## **Tort Reform**

Georgia's apportionment statute came out of the Tort Reform Act of 2005; it requires a defendant to pay damages only for the percentage for which they are determined to be responsible. However, a recent Supreme Court of Georgia case, *Alston & Bird, LLP v. Hatcher Management Holdings, LLC*, held that damages cannot be apportioned to non-parties in cases where there is one defendant.

[House Bill 961](#) by House Judiciary Chairman Chuck Efstation (R-Dacula) allows for apportionment of damages in single-defendant lawsuits. The bill was widely supported by the business community this year. After the House postponed a vote on the measure about 10 times earlier this session, the bill ended up passing both the House and Senate unanimously. It is now sitting on Governor Kemp's desk for his consideration.

## **Psychiatric Advance Directive**

While House Bill 1013 was the most comprehensive and widely discussed mental health bill this session, it was not the only one to receive final passage by the legislature. [House Bill 752](#), by House Health and Human Services Chairman Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta), provides for the creation of psychiatric advance directives in Georgia. This would allow a competent adult with mental illness to specify his or her preferences for treatment and identify an agent who would be authorized to make decisions on his or her behalf in advance of a mental health crisis. In committee hearings this session, Chairman Cooper noted that the bill would be advantageous to emergency department physicians who may otherwise be unclear on a patient's wishes for emergency mental health treatment.

The bill lays out the structure for a psychiatric advance directive. Portions of the document include, but are not limited to, information regarding the individual's mental health symptoms, preferred clinicians, treatment instructions, and the designation of a mental health care agent and back-up mental health care agent.

The bill clarifies that no provider, facility, or person can be subject to civil or criminal liability or discipline for unprofessional conduct for complying with the instructions in an advance directive or for complying with the direction of the appointed mental health care agent, even in the case of injury or death of the patient. The final version of the bill passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee adds a

provision which authorizes a healthcare facility to prepare or offer to prepare an advance directive for health care if requested by the patient. The bill also specifies the methods by which an individual may revoke a directive. The House agreed to changes made by the Senate in the final days of session. The bill has now been sent to Governor Kemp for his consideration.

### **Parents' Bill of Rights**

In the final days of the session, the Senate approved a measure which will enact the 'Parents' Bill of Rights.' [House Bill 1178](#), carried by Governor's Floor Leader Josh Bonner (R-Fayetteville), was a priority for Governor Kemp this session, who touched on the issue in his State of the State Address in January. The bill seeks to prevent schools and governments from interfering with the right of parents to direct the upbringing and education of their children by enumerating some of parents' specific rights including, but not limited to, the right to review instructional materials and the right to access all of their children's records at school. In addition to greater access to information and more transparency for parents, the bill also seeks to facilitate more parent involvement in schools. The measure has been sent to Governor Kemp for his signature.

### **Gas Tax Suspension**

Earlier this session Governor Kemp announced plans to work with the legislature to temporarily suspend the state's 29.1 cent per gallon excise tax on motor fuel sales due to the extreme and rapid increase in gas prices as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The legislature quickly got to work and both chambers passed the gas tax suspension unanimously using [House Bill 304](#) as a vehicle. The governor signed the measure on March 18— the state gas tax suspension went into effect immediately upon Kemp's signature and runs through May 31, 2022.

### **School Scholarship Organization Legislation**

Georgia's school scholarship organization (SSO) program provides tax credits to individual and corporate donors who give to provide scholarships to students from K-12 public schools to allow them to attend private schools chosen by their parents. After some back and forth between the House and Senate this session, the final version of [House Bill 517](#) by Representative John Carson (R-Marietta) includes transparency and accountability measures for the program, increases the annual aggregate amount of the tax credit program from \$100 million to \$120 million, and does away with the sunset. The bill was a big win for supporters of school choice this year after several measures that would have created educational savings accounts failed. The increase of the total program amount to \$120 annually fulfills a campaign promise for Governor Kemp, who said he was in favor of doubling the program when it was at \$58 million. The legislation now sits on the governor's desk awaiting his signature.

### **'LESS Crime Act'**

[Senate Bill 361](#) by Senator Larry Walker (R- Perry) creates a tax credit for donations made to local law enforcement foundations- up to a \$5,000 tax credit for single filers and \$10,000 for a married couple filing a joint return or for an 'S' corporation. The structure of the tax credit closely resembles existing tax credit programs, such as the tax credit program that benefits Georgia's rural hospitals.

The new tax credit program, which was a legislative priority for outgoing Lieutenant Governor Geoff Duncan this session, has an aggregate limit of \$75 million per year. A slightly modified version of the bill passed the House in the final days of session by a margin of 153 to 5, and the Senate unanimously agreed to changes made by the House. The bill now awaits Governor Kemp's signature.

Another bill would have created a similar tax credit program for contributions made to certain foster child support organizations. [Senate Bill 370](#), which was also a legislative priority for Lieutenant Governor Geoff Duncan, was carried by Senator Bill Cowsert (R-Athens), who is typically an opponent of tax

credits. The bill passed the Senate unanimously, but it failed to receive a vote in the House before the midnight deadline on April 4.

### **Free Speech Zones on College Campuses**

[House Bill 1](#), which was introduced by Governor’s Floor Leader Josh Bonner last session, enacts the ‘Forming Open and Robust University Minds’ or ‘FORUM’ Act. The bill clarifies that unrestricted outdoor areas of the campuses of the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia are public forums and prevents the creation of limited “free speech zones” for students on college campuses. The measure allows individuals to engage in expressive activities on campus as long as they are not illegal, do not constitute student-on-student harassment, and do not substantially disrupt the functions of the institution. The bill was passed by the House earlier this session by a margin of 93 to 62 and was approved by the Senate on the last day of session by a vote of 33 to 18. The bill is now sitting on the governor’s desk for final approval.

### **Apprenticeship Programs**

Workforce development remains one of the most significant challenges for growth in the state. To address this issue, in the final days of session the legislature approved a measure which establishes a program to promote the creation and expansion of registered apprenticeship programs in Georgia. [Senate Bill 379](#) by Senator Brian Strickland (R-McDonough) is a bipartisan piece of legislation that establishes the “High-demand Career Incentives Program” within the Office of Workforce Development. The program seeks to incentivize apprenticeship sponsors to establish or grow registered apprenticeship programs in the state to expand work-based learning experiences in high-demand fields with a \$10,000 per apprentice award for the sponsor. The measure has been sent to Governor Kemp for his signature.