



2017 – 2018 Legislative Session

Georgia House Democratic Caucus
Legislative Agenda

THE 2017 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA:

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Anti-Discrimination Act (HB 230): Sponsored by **Rep. Rhonda Burnough** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Spencer Frye** and **Rep. Park Cannon**, this legislation would ensure that schools receiving funding from Student Scholarship Organizations do not discriminate based on race, gender, national origin, religion, sexuality or disability.

Higher Education Access and Success for Homeless and Foster Youth Act (HB 307): Sponsored by **Rep. Sandra Scott** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Dexter Sharper**, this bill would provide in-state tuition at the University System of Georgia and TCS Georgia for youth who are from foster care or homeless situations. This bill also excludes foster care assistance from being considered income when calculating financial aid.

Too Young to Suspend Act: Sponsored by **Rep. Wayne Howard** and co-sponsored by **Rep. “Coach” Williams** and Rep. Pam Dickerson, this bill would prohibit the use of suspension or expulsion as punishment for children enrolled from pre-K through 3rd grade except in instances of physical violence.

Child Safety and Emergency Preparedness Act (HB 297): Sponsored by **Rep. Debra Bazemore** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Michael Smith** and **Rep. Kim Alexander**, this legislation provides for required and revised safety plans in early care and education programs to demonstrate preparedness for fires, floods, tornadoes, snow, ice storms, earthquakes, chemical spills, and acts of violence. Under this bill, plans would be prepared in consultation with parents, legal guardians and faculty of programs, and plans would be submitted to the local emergency management agency. The safety plans will be subject to regulation and inspection.

Dropout Deterrent Act: Sponsored by **Rep. Mickey Stephens** and co-sponsored by **Rep. “Able” Mable Thomas**, the Dropout Deterrent Act: will revise the age of mandatory education from between ages 6 and 16 to between ages 5 and 17.

Student Online Personal Information Protection Act (HB 170): Sponsored by **Rep. Sheila Jones** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Sheila Clark Nelson**, this legislation would prohibit on-line website operators from targeting advertising to students or their guardians. It would also prohibit them from using personal information to create an online profile of a K-12 student. Most importantly, it would make it a criminal act for companies to sell a child’s personal information.

College Completion Access Act (HB 376): Sponsored by **Rep. Brenda Lopez** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Keisha Waites** and **Rep. Marie Metze**, this legislation would eliminate the current bar on eligibility for the HOPE Scholarship facing individuals who are more than seven years removed from high school, thus broadening access to the University System of Georgia for non-traditional students.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

Expand Medicaid NOW Act (HB 188): Sponsored by **House Minority Leader Stacey Abrams** and co-sponsored by Democratic Caucus **Vice-Chair Bob Trammell**, **Secretary Pat Gardner**, and **Rep. Bill McGowan**, this legislation would compel Georgia's Department of Community Health to expand state Medicaid eligibility up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level and provide health insurance coverage for nearly half a million Georgians.

Georgia Paid Sick Leave Act (HB 267): Sponsored by **Rep. Kim Alexander** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Marie Metze** and **Rep. Derrick Jackson**, this legislation would mandate full-time employees will accrue, or bank, one hour of paid sick leave for every thirty hours he or she works up to 56 hours per year. Employers will remain free to provide additional paid leave beyond the minimum amount required by law.

Fair Chance at Employment Act (HB 182): Sponsored by **Rep. Winfred Dukes** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Michele Henson** and **Rep. Debra Bazemore**, this bill would protect employees and job applicants from unfair practices in the workplace by prohibiting the use of consumer credit checks for the purpose of making employment decisions. Failure by employers to abide by this law could result in a misdemeanor conviction, punishable by a fine.

Angel Investor Act (HB 89): Sponsored by **Rep. Dar'shun Kendrick** and co-sponsored by **Rep. J. Craig Gordon**, this legislation would open the door for a wider range of investment by creating a new investor class eligible for tax credits. To qualify for the tax credit, the investment must be made in a small, Georgia-grown business engaged in an emerging technology-based industry.

Georgia Jobs Matter Act (HB 216): Sponsored by **Rep. Debbie Buckner** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Demetrius Douglas**, **Rep. Bill McGowan**, and **Rep. Karla Drenner**, this legislation would amend the purchasing guidelines for state and local governments to include a provision requiring preference be given to products manufactured in, and to service providers based in, Georgia.

Georgia Fair Pay Act (HB 207): Sponsored by **Rep. Miriam Paris** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Wayne Howard**, this legislation would require state accounting offices to pay state money due to vendors within 15 (electronic invoices) or 30 (printed invoices) days of receipt of undisputed invoices. In the event that invoices are not paid as required, the state shall pay interest on the amount of such invoices equal to 12 percent per year.

Working Wages Equalization Act (HB 339): Sponsored by **Rep. Erica Thomas** and co-sponsored by **Rep. David Dreyer**, this legislation would increase the Georgia state minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. In the event of an increase in the federal minimum wage, this legislation would require that Georgia's minimum wage automatically increase to match the federal wage six months after the date upon which the federal wage is raised. This legislation would take effect on the beginning of the calendar year immediately following its enactment.

Child Care Affordability Act: Sponsored by **Rep. Renitta Shannon** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Pam Stephenson** and **Rep. Sheila Clark Nelson**, this legislation would provide for a state child care tax credit.

Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (HB 184): Sponsored by **Rep. William Boddie** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Park Cannon** and **Rep. Erica Thomas**, this legislation would provide a state cause of action in employment related matters in which a pregnant or recently pregnant employee has suffered an adverse employment action as a result of their pregnancy. The legislation mirrors existing federal employment discrimination law, but provides for state level jurisdiction and remedies.

Georgia Pay Equity Act (HB 345): Sponsored by **Rep. Park Cannon** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Karla Drenner** and **Rep. Debra Bazemore**, this legislation would seek to promote pay equity in Georgia. The bill would prohibit employers from requiring past salary history to be provided before issuing a formal job offer. The bill would also prohibit employers for taking adverse employment action against employees who discuss their salary or wages.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Taxpayers First Act: Sponsored by **Rep. Carl Gilliard** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Sharon Beasley-Teague**, this legislation would require all state departments and agencies, before entering into a private contract, to publicly demonstrate the cost savings of privatization. The state would be prohibited from entering into any private contract unless there is a 10 percent or more overall cost savings, compared to hiring the public employees for the job. Private contractors would be required to include all direct and indirect costs of the project, when the side-by-side comparison was completed.

Open Records Act (HB 304): Sponsored by **Rep. Derrick Jackson** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Sharon Beasley-Teague** and **Rep. Dewey McClain**, this legislation would require that any contract entered into by the state and valued at \$50,000 or more be subject to Georgia's Open Records and Meeting Laws. This bill also would require any company being paid with tax dollars to open its books and meetings to the public, just as the government does.

Any Precinct Act (HB 22): Sponsored by **Rep. Roger Bruce** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Pat Gardner** and **Rep. David Dreyer**, this legislation would allow voters to cast their ballot at any precinct in their home county in a primary, runoff and general election.

Permanent Portable Registration Act (HB 346): Sponsored by **Rep. Sam Park** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Gloria Frazier** and **Rep. Erica Thomas**, this legislation would allow eligible voters to remain registered within the state without re-registering, even if those voters move between counties or change their names. Voters who have changed their names or addresses within the state would be able to cast their vote by simply updating their information at their polling location, rather than re-registering far in advance of Election Day.

Social Media Privacy Protection Act (HB 389): Sponsored by **Rep. Doreen Carter** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Pam Stephenson** and **Rep. Sheila Jones**, this legislation would enhance privacy protection in the digital age by prohibiting employers from asking for passwords on social media sites, which employers often do as a requirement for employment. This bill would make it illegal for employers to demand access to applicants' or employees' private information and profiles online, as well as to deny employment to or discipline individuals who refuse to volunteer such information.

Contract Cancellation Act (HB 189): Sponsored by **Rep. Sheila Clark Nelson** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Brian Prince**, this legislation would ensure that every state-authorized contract includes language that permits the state to cancel the contract if the company the state has contracted with fails to meet its obligations of quality and cost savings.

Access to Public Services for Non-English Speakers Act (HB 177): Sponsored by **Rep. Pedro Marin** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Sam Park** and **Rep. Brenda Lopez**, this legislation would require all state agencies that provide direct public services to offer free interpretation and translation services to members of the public, for vital forms and instructions. This bill would mandate that state and local agencies employ a sufficient number of qualified bilingual persons in public contact positions to provide information and services to the public in the language of the non-English speaking person.

Timely Process Act (HB 167): Sponsored by **Rep. Patty Bentley** and co-sponsored by **Rep. William Boddie**, this legislation would require the Secretary of State or any county receiving an application for voter registration to process the application within 45 days of receipt. This bill would provide for a legal remedy in the event that election officials do not comply.

Absentee Ballot Access Act: Sponsored by **Rep. J. Craig Gordon** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Rhonda Burnough** and **Rep. Marie Metze**, this legislation would enable an individual making a request for an absentee ballot to opt-in to receive an absentee ballot request form prior to every election in which they are eligible to vote without making additional, subsequent requests.

Domestic Violence Helping Hands Act (HB 291): Sponsored by **Rep. James Beverly** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Doreen Carter** and **Rep. Stacey Evans**, this legislation would require that the Georgia Secretary of State provide free training and resources on recognizing domestic violence and abuse to barbers, cosmetologists, and nail technicians upon each license renewal.

Licensees would have to verify that they have reviewed such materials in order to renew their license, but shall not incur any additional cost or legal obligation.

Georgia Voters' Bill of Rights (HB 180): Sponsored by **Rep. David Dreyer** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Sandra Scott** and **Rep. Carl Gilliard**, this legislation would:

1. Allow for automatic voter registration when obtaining a driver's license or during other interactions with a state agency, such as DFCS, Aging Services, DCA, or registering for any classes at a public college or vocational and technical school.
2. Permit registered voters to change their address and also vote on Election Day.
3. Require that precincts cannot be moved or closed within 90 days of an election barring impossibility.
4. Require that counties make voting precincts available within 25 miles of every voter.
5. Require that early voting locations must be geographically distributed throughout the county.

A PROMISE KEPT

Educating Children of Military Families Act: Sponsored by **Rep. Mike Glanton** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Darrel Ealum** and **Rep. Mickey Stephens**, this bill would authorize the Georgia Department of Education to establish a unique identifier for children of military personnel for the purposes of disaggregating and sharing data related to the educational achievement and progress of such students.

Protecting Military Children Act: Sponsored by **Rep. Brian Prince** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Bill McGowan** and **Rep. Derrick Jackson**, this legislation would provide for the free exchange of information between the Division of Family and Children Services and the Department of Defense to ensure that allegations and issues of child abuse and/or neglect are promptly and appropriately investigated and resolved.

Military Spouses Employment Act: Sponsored by **Rep. Al Williams** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Scott Holcomb** and House **Minority Whip Carolyn Hugley**, this legislation would require that the Georgia Department of Education adopt and implement a process by which military spouses may qualify for temporary teaching licenses, teaching licenses by endorsement, or expedited teaching licenses.

“Georgia Veterans Work Opportunity Tax Credit” Sponsored by **Rep. Karen Bennett** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Calvin Smyre** and **Rep. Scott Holcomb**, this bill mirrors the Federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit Act, which is meant to encourage employers to hire qualifying veterans. The Georgia Work Opportunity Tax Credit Act: creates a one-year tax credit for each new employee hired from one of the mentioned categories (after approval by the Georgia Department of Labor). The tax credit for employers can equal up to 40% of \$4,500 (\$4,800 for veterans), once the employee has worked more than 400 hours. A similar 25% credit is available for employees who worked between 120-400 hours in a taxable year.

“Credit for Service” Resolution Sponsored by **Rep. Darrel Ealum** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Gloria Frazier** and **Rep. Dexter Sharper**, this resolution would urge the University System of Georgia and Technical College System of Georgia to devise standards by which separating service members may translate their military training and experience into academic credit.

“Increasing Interstate Access to Veteran Employment” Resolution Sponsored by **Rep. Sandra Scott** and co-sponsored by **Rep. Sheila Clark Nelson**, this resolution will urge Georgia professional boards to consider adopting interstate occupational licensing compacts that ease the ability of separating service members and military spouses licensed in other states to transfer their license to Georgia.