Changes in Health Care and Policy in the 2015 Georgia Legislative Session

LAURA COLBERT, MPH, CHES
COMMUNITY OUTREACH MANAGER
GEORGNIANS FOR A HEALTHY FUTURE

ANDY LORD
LOBBYIST
Objectives

• At the end of this presentation, you should:
  ◦ Be familiar with bills and resolutions considered by the General Assembly that affect health care and health policy in Georgia
  ◦ Understand themes and issues related to health care that arose during the legislative session
  ◦ Be prepared to take action on health care policy in Georgia
Outline

• Budget
• Passed bills
• Study committees
• Bills that did not pass
• Missed opportunities
• Resources
Georgians for a Healthy Future

1. Outreach, Education, & Engagement with Consumers & Communities
2. Coalition Building: Leadership, Coordination, & Strategic Direction
3. Engagement with Policymakers
4. Policy Change for a Healthier Georgia
GHF’s 2015 Policy Priorities

• Close Georgia’s coverage gap by expanding Medicaid
• Ensure access to quality health care services for Medicaid and PeachCare beneficiaries
• Maximize enrollment and ensure a positive experience for Georgia consumers with private health insurance
• Increase Georgia’s tobacco tax
• Re-invest in Georgia’s public health infrastructure to support a healthy and prosperous state.

Georgia’s health policy environment

• Republican Governor

• 2/3 majority Republican Senate and House
  ◦ 10 health professionals

• Evolving ACA sentiment

• Struggling rural hospital system

• Inadequate Medicaid provider reimbursement rates

• Low priority for preventive health care, public health
Georgia’s legislative sessions

- 2-year cycle called “biennial”
- Off-session is important
State Budget

Source: Georgia Budget & Policy Institute, Georgia Budget Primer 2015
State Budget: Dept. of Community Health

- Operates Medicaid, PeachCare, State Health Benefit Plan, & other health regulatory and planning programs

- $156 M in new federal money saves state dollars
  - $93.6 M—↑ federal match rate for PeachCare
  - $62.7 M—Medicaid annual adjustment

- $89 M for projected Medicaid, PeachCare growth due to new enrollments & health care inflation (generates $171 fed. match)

- $23 M for partial Medicaid payment parity ($60 M for full parity)

Source: Georgia Budget & Policy Institute, Overview: 2016 Fiscal Year for the Department of Community Health
State Budget: Notable Changes

• Dept. of Community Health—$3 B total
  ◦ $3 M for Rural Hospital Stabilization Committee pilot program
  ◦ $500,000 for charity care clinics
  ◦ $2 M for pay increase for Direct Support Professionals
  ◦ Task Force to submit plan to support uncompensated care as DSH payments are reduced ($0)

Source: Georgia’s FY 2016 Budget (HB 76)
State Budget: Notable Changes

- Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities—$988 M total
  - $19.6 M above the 2015 budget
  - $13.6 for DOJ settlement funding
    - $1.1 M for 75 new NOW/COMP waivers
  - $1.4 M for 8 crisis stabilization beds in Fulton Co
  - $1 M for increased forensic funding
  - $490k for supported employment

- Dept. of Public Health—$241 M total
  - $8.8M above 2015 budget
  - $1.4 for hold harmless funds for county grant-in-aid
  - $288k to implement HB 1 (medical cannabis)
  - $300k total for following – Georgiacancerinfo.org, Hep C testing, childhood cancer research, sickle cell
Passed Bills: Headliners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill #</th>
<th>Common name/purpose</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SB 1</td>
<td>Autism bill/Ava’s law—requires coverage of certain autism therapies</td>
<td>Amended to HB 429 and passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB 1</td>
<td>Medical marijuana bill—allows for use of cannabis oil as treatment for certain chronic diseases</td>
<td>Passed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Passed Bills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill #</th>
<th>Common name/purpose</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SB 51/HB 195</td>
<td>Biosimilars bill</td>
<td>Passed as SB 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB 436</td>
<td>HIV/Syphilis Pregnancy Screening Act of 2015—Req. doctors to offer testing for syphilis and HIV to women in 3rd trimester</td>
<td>Passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB 504</td>
<td>Vaccine bill—allows pharmacists &amp; nurses to give adults vaccines for meningitis, shingles, and pneumonia</td>
<td>Passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB 416</td>
<td>Badge bill—health care providers must list their name and educational degree on their ID</td>
<td>Passed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Study Committees

### Joint
- Study committee on Health, Education and School-Based Health Centers (SBHC)—HR 640
- Study committee on Children’s Mental Health—HR 641
- Rural Hospital Stabilization Committee—cont. from 2014

### Senate
- Study Committee on Preventing Youth Substance Use Disorders—SR 487
- Study Committee on Consumer & Provider Protection Act—SR 561 (spin off of SB 158)
- Women’s Adequate Healthcare Study Committee—SR 560
# Bills that did not pass

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill #</th>
<th>Common name/purpose</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HB 482</td>
<td>CTCA bill—eliminates two req. that CTCA was subject to when they were allowed to GA as a destination hospital (loosening of CON regs.)</td>
<td>Tabled in House Govt. Affairs Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB 34</td>
<td>Right to Try—allows patients with advanced illnesses, and in consultation with their doctor, to use potentially life-saving investigational drugs, biological products, and devices</td>
<td>Passed out of House Health &amp; Human Services (HHS) committee. Did not crossover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB 649</td>
<td>GA Lactation Consultant Practice Act—provides for the licensing of lactation consultants</td>
<td>Referred to House HHS committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bills that did not pass

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill #</th>
<th>Common name/purpose</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HB 92/ SB 242</td>
<td>Family Care Act—allow individuals whose employers provide sick days the option of using up to five days to care for family members</td>
<td>HB 92—Referred to House Industry &amp; Labor Committee&lt;br&gt;S 242—Referred to Sen. Industry &amp; Labor, but moved to Sen. HHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR 226</td>
<td>House Resolution to close Georgia’s coverage gap</td>
<td>Did not pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB 38</td>
<td>Close Georgia’s coverage gap</td>
<td>Referred to appropriations committee.&lt;br&gt;Did not receive hearing, vote.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB 130</td>
<td>Smoke Free Cars for Children</td>
<td>Passed Senate, did not get through House</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Missed opportunities

• Closing the coverage gap
• Increase Georgia’s tobacco tax
• Full funding for Medicaid payment parity (auto-escalators)
• Allow for state-run health insurance exchange
Missed opportunities: Close Georgia’s coverage gap

BACKGROUND

MEDICAID COVERAGE

Medicaid eligible adults include some pregnant women, and very low-income parents and people with disabilities.

COVERAGE GAP

People who don’t qualify for Medicaid and whose incomes are too low to qualify for financial help in the health insurance marketplace.

MARKETPLACE COVERAGE

Incomes that may qualify for financial help in the health insurance marketplace.

OPPORTUNITY

• Cover 500,000 Georgians
  ◦ Working families
  ◦ Young people
  ◦ Veterans

• $200 M in new tax revenue annually & 50,000 new jobs

• Cost-neutral

• No risk!
Missed opportunities: Close Georgia’s coverage gap

To let your legislators know that you think Georgia should close it’s coverage gap, visit:

healthyfuturega.org/issues/cover-georgia

Scroll down to the purple postcard and click the link.
Missed opportunities: Tobacco tax

BACKGROUND

• Current tax= $0.37
• National average= $1.54
• For every penny increase in tax, state revenue increases by $5 million
• Every 10% increase retail price of a pack of cigarettes = corresponding ~4% decrease in cigarette consumption
  ◦ Reductions among youth= 7%

OPPORTUNITY

• Suggested tax increase of $1.23
• Tobacco tax increase is most effective ways to reduce smoking & other tobacco use among kids.
• Reduce cancer deaths, improve quality of life for Georgians
• Resulting annual revenue increase of up to $585 million
Missed opportunities: Medicaid parity

BACKGROUND

• Increases provider reimbursement rates (equitable for Medicare rates) for certain services provided to Medicaid enrollees

• Reimbursement rate increase provided in ACA expired Dec. 31, 2014

• Other southern states to maintain parity: AL, MS, SC

OPPORTUNITY

• $60 M appropriation needed for full parity

• $23 M appropriation in final budget

• Increased reimbursement rates facilitate better access to providers, primary care services for Medicaid enrollees

• Auto-escalators
Missed opportunities: State exchange

BACKGROUND

• King v. Burwell—challenges constitutionality of tax subsidies offered through federal exchange

• GA—federal marketplace state

• HB 943 (2014)—precludes state from running its own exchange

• 90% of GA’s 500,000+ enrollees received subsidies

• No change to subsidies currently

OPPORTUNITY

• Repeal HB 707 language or introduce new language to allow Georgia to set up its own exchange

• Protect consumers from possible loss of subsidies and coverage

• Prevents insurance market “death spiral” and market uncertainty
What now?

• Contact both of your legislators
  ◦ Thank them for their work this session
  ◦ Ask about a missed opportunity:
    ◦ King v. Burwell: Does GA have a plan?
    ◦ Do you support an increased tobacco tax?
    ◦ Would you support Medicaid payment parity?
    ◦ Do you support closing the coverage gap by expanding Medicaid?
  ◦ Keep in touch!

• Let GHF know what they say.

To find your legislators:

Visit [healthyfuturega.org → Advocacy Center → Contact Your Legislators](http://healthyfuturega.org)
Resources

Georgians for a Healthy Future
www.healthyfuturega.org

@healthyfuturega

facebook.com/healthyfuturega

GA General Assembly website
• legis.ga.gov

Georgia Health News
• georgiahealthnews.com

Georgia Budget & Policy Institute
• gbpi.org  |  @GaBudget
Thank you!

Laura Colbert  
Community Outreach Manager  
Georgians for a Healthy Future  
Office: 404-890-5804  
lcolbert@healthyfuturega.org

Andy Lord  
Lobbyist  
andylord@ga-lobbyist.com