

No different from the rest of the world in 2020, Georgians for a Healthy Future faced some of the biggest challenges in our organization's history.

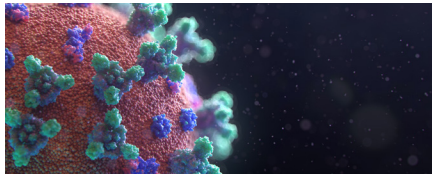
With your steadfast advocacy, partnership, and support, GHF rose to the occasion and proved resilient!

Most importantly, GHF persisted in our efforts to amplify the voices of Georgia health care consumers, turning up the volume to reach the ears of our state's public policy makers.



# The urgency of public policy advocacy during COVID-19

When GHF’s staff left our office on Thursday, March 12, 2020, we thought we would return to our desks, have coffee in the break room, and meet around the conference table the following morning. We haven’t been back in the office as a group since that day. Even as we adapted to a newly remote environment, the GHF team worked in earnest to protect the health and well-being of our families, friends, and all Georgians through public policy advocacy. Here are a few highlights from our efforts:



## Improve Georgia’s COVID-19 response & policies.

GHF convened consumer and patient advocacy groups in the first few weeks of Georgia’s epidemic and regularly since then to share information about the pandemic, state prevention and response efforts, and resources to keep Georgians healthy and whole. We provided leadership for the group’s collective advocacy efforts to improve COVID-19 response & policies. Our wins included:

- Improved collection and reporting of race, ethnicity, gender, and other demographic information for COVID-19 cases and deaths; and
- The formation of a health equity council to inform the state’s response efforts.

## Collect and share accurate information

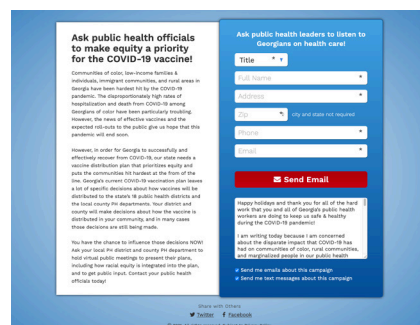
GHF collected and shared accurate, trustworthy information for Georgia consumers about testing, contact tracing, and—more recently—vaccines. Through many months of the pandemic, we identified and tracked

[state policy changes](#) that we knew were necessary for the health and well-being of Georgians. Our advocacy for these changes continues, as outlined in our 2021-2022 [policy priorities](#).

## Advocacy Portal to address disproportionate impacts on communities of color

After seeing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Georgia’s communities of color, GHF worked with two partner groups to create an easy-to-use advocacy portal that allows Georgians to contact their district public health directors about prioritizing racial equity in local vaccine distribution efforts

The portal was recognized by [Anti-Racism Daily](#) as a promising practice for addressing racial inequities during the COVID-19 pandemic.



*By giving early, increasing their donations, or changing how they gave, several grant makers and donors enabled the GHF team to expend time, resources, and energy on urgent COVID-19 policy and advocacy efforts. This responsive support was fundamental to our success and sustainability. Thank you for your generosity, strategic thinking, and partnership!*

## Advocacy for mental health programs and substance prevention

GHF received a COVID-19 Response & Recovery Fund grant from the United Way of Greater Atlanta and Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta to advocate for mental health programs, systems, and supports during the pandemic. Our advocacy for community- and school-based mental health and substance use services builds on GHF’s decade of work promoting [youth substance use prevention](#), early intervention, and recovery in partnership with the Georgia Council on Substance Abuse and the Center for Pan Asian Community Services.

## Briefed newly elected leaders on public policy lessons learned from COVID-19

GHF collaborated with 14 partner organizations to plan and host a workshop for newly elected state leaders in December 2020. The workshop featured a briefing on the public policy lessons learned from COVID-19, the soon-to-be-released vaccines, and policies that would restore Georgia’s health and economic well-being.



# Protecting and promoting a pathway to coverage for every Georgian

Continuing an effort that began in 2019, Georgia Governor Kemp persisted in his push for two health care “waiver” plans even as the pandemic raged through Georgia communities. One of the plans would extend Medicaid coverage to a small fraction of uninsured, low-income Georgians and would cost three times more per person than Medicaid expansion. The other plan would disconnect Georgians from the Affordable Care Act’s health insurance marketplace without offering a replacement, putting many at increased risk of becoming uninsured or underinsured.

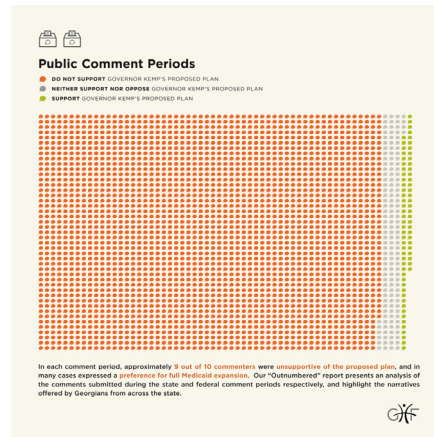
### Informing Georgians

In partnership with Georgia Equality, Black Voters Matter, the Georgia Budget & Policy Institute, and other [Cover Georgia](#) coalition partners, we reached more than 40,000 Georgians with information about Governor Kemp’s health care plans and how they might be impacted.

### Georgians as part of the policy-making process

From November 2019 to September 2020, GHF and partners mobilized more than 4200 Georgians to submit comments about how the Governor’s waiver plans would impact them or their loved ones. These comments make up an impressive legal record that can be used by courts and federal

health officials to protect consumers from the most harmful provisions of the waivers and prompt Georgia leaders to reconsider their plans.



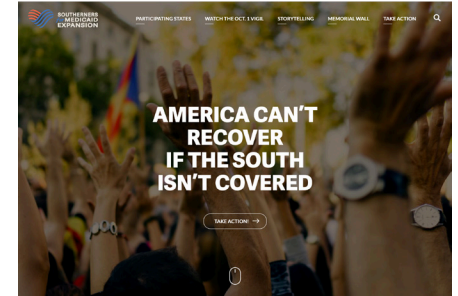
In our [Outnumbered](#) analysis, GHF found that commenters preferred Medicaid expansion to the Governor’s plan by a 9-to-1 margin.

### Lifting consumer stories

In June 2020, GHF hired a full-time story collector. This dedicated staff position works with Georgians of all stripes to tell and amplify their stories about being uninsured, Medicaid or ACA coverage, medical debt, mental health and substance use, and more. Their stories animate the urgency of Medicaid expansion and many other health issues facing Georgia today.



Amy, Tanyetta, & Travis — Georgians who shared their health story with GHF.



### Southerners for Medicaid Expansion Coalition

GHF collaborated with health advocates in seven other non-expansion states to launch the [Southerners for Medicaid Expansion](#) coalition. The coalition kick-off the group’s work with a virtual multi-state rally headlined by Rev. William Barber and Stacey Abrams.

### Provide facts to inform the public conversation

GHF staff provided easy-to-understand analysis, facts, and data to state legislators, reporters and media outlets, dozens of community groups, and many other stakeholders on the Governor’s two health care plans, the likely impacts on Georgians and their families, and the growing prospects for Medicaid expansion in our state. Because of GHF’s work, the public conversation surrounding these plans was more fact-based, consumer-focused, and comprehensive.



## Five years in the making: 2020 success on surprise billing protections for consumers

In 2020, Georgia became the [16th state](#) to adopt comprehensive protections against surprise medical bills. Surprise out-of-network medical bills often burden patients with high amounts of medical debt, and Georgia’s new law relieves families of that struggle. This win was a long time in the making and was made possible by a committed group of state leaders and the leadership, persistence, and creativity of GHF and our partners at Georgia Watch. The generosity of GHF’s donors allowed us to persist on this issue until we found success!



### 2015-2016

Following the 2015 legislative session, the Georgia Senate convened the [Consumer and Provider Protection Act](#) study committee to look at surprise billing and other affordability issues. GHF’s then Executive Director was appointed as a study committee member.

GHF and Georgia Watch followed the study committee’s work with the [Getting What You Pay For](#) policy forum in February 2016.

As a result of the study committee’s work, the policy forum, and powerful advocacy by Georgia Watch and GHF, the 2016 legislative session saw the successful passage of [SB 302](#), which required health insurers to maintain accurate lists (called “provider directories”) of in-network medical providers.

### 2017-2019

In 2017, GHF and Georgia Watch worked closely with legislative leaders to craft legislation that would protect Georgia consumers from surprise medical bills.

Unfortunately, these bills failed because of disagreements between insurers and health care providers about how to resolve payment disputes.

Dedicated leadership by legislators and continued advocacy by GHF & other consumer groups could not overcome the disagreements between doctors and hospitals, and health insurance companies.

This dynamic continued through the 2018 and 2019 legislative sessions, leaving consumers exposed to unfair medical bills through no fault of their own.

### 2019-2020

In the summer of 2019, Georgia Watch and GHF approached legislative leaders with a creative new approach.

GHF invited [national experts on surprise billing](#) to work with legislative leaders. The expert assistance brought a few fresh ideas to the debate and loosened the multi-year log jam.

Legislative leaders—as eager as GHF was to break the stalemate—used the experts’ information, along with input from Georgia Watch and GHF, to develop a Georgia-specific solution.

This unique strategy attracted the support of the Governor. As the bill moved through the General Assembly, a growing number of legislators, hospitals, and provider groups lent their support to the legislation.

Through careful negotiation and strategic planning, the bill eventually passed with near unanimous support from the General Assembly and was signed into law in July 2020.







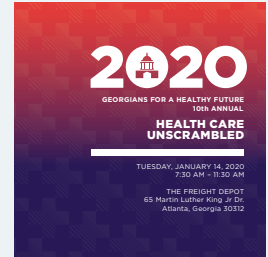
## GHF by the numbers!



### 7,339 voices heard

Connected 7339 Georgians with their state leaders to convey their needs, priorities, and ideas about health and health care.

### 200+ attendees



### 4,300 Georgians reached

Reached more than 4300 Georgia consumers through virtual trainings, presentations, and other events



### Exceeded fundraising goal by

## 50%

Virtually held GHF's first ever Give 'Em Health trivia night and exceeded our fundraising goal by 50%!



Hosted more than 200 attendees at Health Care Unscrambled 2020 with Dr. Jamila Michener, Author and Assistant Professor of Government at Cornell University. During the event, GHF was privileged to posthumously award the Linda S. Lowe Advocacy Award to Dawn Alford, a tireless advocate for Georgians with disabilities.

### 48 media stories

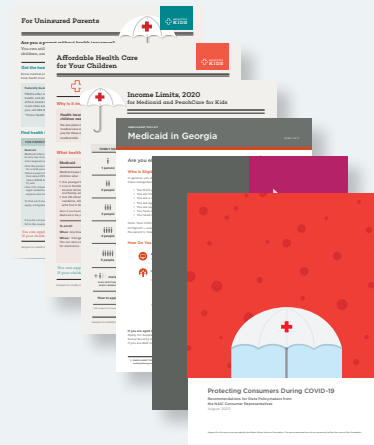
Injected the consumer perspective in 48 media stories about timely consumer health policy issues

### 16 health issues

Delivered public comments or testimony to state and national decision makers on 16 consumer health issues

### 19 publications & products for consumers

Published [19 reports, fact sheets, blogs, and other products](#) to help consumers understand Georgia's health policy landscape, their own power as advocates, and the health care and insurance systems



**Meet the GHF team:**

Knetta Adkins  
*Organizing Manager*

Laura Colbert  
*Executive Director*

Michelle Conde  
*Communications &  
Special Projects Manager*

Whitney Griggs  
*Health Policy Analyst*

Lois Hairston  
*Story Collection Coordinator*

**GHF 2020 Board of Directors**

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Jennifer Murphy Morgan, *Chair elect*  
Banny Lesesne, *Treasurer*  
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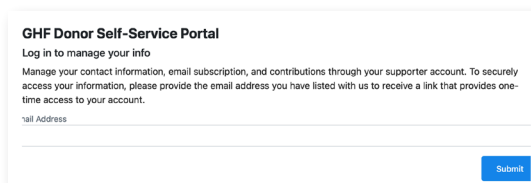
*Your support makes our work possible!*

GHF is deeply appreciative of the following foundations, organizations, and individuals who donated \$1,000 or more to support our mission in 2020. We are so grateful for the many donors who made smaller contributions, chose not to be listed, or who gave their time and expertise.

- American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
- American College of Rheumatology
- Amerigroup
- Robert & Amy Arogeti
- Dewanna Burke
- CareSource
- Thalia & Michael Carlos Foundation
- Community Catalyst
- Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta
- Emory University Rollins School of Public Health
- Todd Evans
- Iris & Bruce Feinberg
- Betty & Davis Fitzgerald Foundation
- Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities
- Georgia Health Foundation
- Georgia Primary Care Association
- Healthcare Georgia Foundation
- Harry Heiman & Abby Friedman
- Hemophilia of Georgia
- John Snow, Inc. (JSI)
- Susan Kupferberg & Richard Mitchell
- Bancroft Lesesne
- Alan & Renee Levow
- Melanie Porter
- Morehouse School of Medicine Satcher Health Leadership Institute
- Positive Impact Health Centers
- PhRMA
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- The Sapelo Foundation
- Cindy Zeldin & Doug Busk

**Donors & supporters, did you see GHF’s new donor portal?**

Visit [healthyfuturega.org/donate](https://healthyfuturega.org/donate). Below the donation form, you will find an easy-to-use log-in that allows you to update your contact information, donation amount and method, and email subscription preferences. When you have had a chance to use it, let us know what you think!



*Self-service portal can be found below the main donation form*