



HEALTHIER FUTURE, POWERED BY PEOPLE.



GEORGIANS FOR A
HEALTHY FUTURE

2024 ANNUAL REPORT





Dear Friends,

In 2024, Georgians for a Healthy Future adopted a new tagline: **'Healthier future, powered by people.'** This isn't just a string of words; it's the heart of our work. From advocating for Medicaid expansion to ensuring healthy housing, our work is a testament to the power of working together to achieve what we couldn't on our own. Across our great state, Georgians come together every day to better their communities and advocate for the health, well-being, and economic stability that all of us deserve. At GHF, we're proud to be a part of that alliance—helping individuals understand what their state leaders are doing that may impact their health and making it easier for Georgians to take action; partnering with local groups to more deeply focus on and support a health issue they are trying to solve; and providing dependable research and analysis that helps make the case for change.

2024 was a year of remarkable progress and change for our organization and for our work with Georgians. We've expanded our team, strengthened our partnerships, and doubled down on effective advocacy strategies to drive meaningful change. We've amplified the voices of remarkable Georgians like Sherthea and Paul, whose stories remind us why our work is so crucial, and secured policy wins that will impact hundreds of thousands of Georgians as they take effect.

This report highlights the powerful impacts of our work last year. We hope that you will see yourself in it—as a Georgian who took action, a partner organization working alongside our GHF team, an advisor, or a generous donor. Together, we are building a healthier future for all Georgians.

Sincerely,

Laura Colbert
Executive Director

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2024 EVENTS RECAP



< 2024 Health Care Unscrambled

Our 14th annual Health Care Unscrambled event brought together state legislators, national experts, and community advocates to discuss critical health policy issues. The dynamic legislative panel, featuring Sen. Sonya Halpern, Sen. Ben Watson, and Rep. Sharon Cooper, tackled topics like Medicaid challenges, hospital oversight, and maternal health.

The keynote panel with Dr. Joan Alker and Dr. Alex Briscoe focused on changes in the Medicaid landscape and how that impacts children's health. The event successfully fostered bipartisan dialogue and spotlighted constructive policy solutions that would improve health and well-being for Georgians.



2024 Advocacy Day >

In February, GHF hosted Cover Georgia's Advocacy Day at the Capitol, rallying Georgians to speak out in support of Medicaid expansion. This event amplified the voices of uninsured Georgians who are stuck in the coverage gap and underscored the urgent need for action by state leaders.





Celebration of Progress & Possibilities >

In September, GHF held its first Celebration of Progress & Possibilities event to recognize and celebrate the hard work of advocates and state leaders in advancing policies and systems that build a healthier Georgia. Dr. Natalie Hernandez, Executive Director of Morehouse School of Medicine's Center for Maternal Health Equity, shared her reflections from more than a decade of partnership and collaboration with GHF. This event honored the collective efforts that are driving positive change in our state.



^ Navigator Program: Community Events

GHF's Health Insurance Navigator program provided free assistance to individuals and families across Georgia. Through community-based outreach and empathetic help, GHF's navigators helped Georgians navigate the complexities of Medicaid during the Medicaid unwinding and private health insurance as the new Georgia Access marketplace replaced healthcare.gov. Navigators play an important role in assisting uninsured residents across the state, particularly in under-

served communities. The program, supported by the Georgia Department of Insurance, connects directly with communities through in-person outreach and local events. Navigators attend and coordinate numerous community events each month, meeting people where they are—in neighborhoods, YMCA locations, schools, and cultural centers—to provide one-on-one assistance and clear guidance on health coverage options.

Continuing the march towards Medicaid expansion

In 2024, GHF continued our fight for Georgians across the state to ensure that no one's health is hampered by where they live, who they are, or how little money they make.

» **A Leading Voice** GHF stood firm as one of the leading voices urging state leaders to choose Medicaid expansion so that low-income adults have health insurance and access to care when they get sick and to keep them healthy.

» Georgia Legislative Session

Jan.-March 2024: During the state's legislative session, GHF collaborated with state leaders and partners to make Medicaid expansion part of the heated discussions about hospital regulations and reforms and to shape a key bill that led to Georgia's first-ever legislative committee hearing on Medicaid expansion.

As a result of GHF's work and partnerships and your advocacy:

- A Senate committee held Georgia's first-ever legislative committee hearing to close the coverage gap. GHF's Executive Director Laura Colbert provided expert testimony on the need for and benefits of expanding coverage, helping state leaders understand why Medicaid expansion is the right choice for our state.

- The Comprehensive Health Coverage Commission (CHCC) was established by HB 1339. The CHCC is charged with examining opportunities to improve access to and quality of health care for low-income and uninsured Georgians, and sharing recommendations with Governor Kemp and the General Assembly. The Commission will continue to meet in 2025 and 2026, so keep up with their activities and how you can participate at CoverGA.org!

» **Coverage Captains** GHF launched our new Coverage Captains initiative to connect with more Georgians about Medicaid expansion. Coverage Captains are local community members who receive training and support from GHF to raise awareness about the need to close Georgia's coverage gap and to mobilize their local communities to support expanding Medicaid. In the first five months of the program, four Coverage Captains reached more than 1000 Georgians!



FEATURE

Paul Mikell

"I just wanted to see a doctor when I got sick. But the paperwork made it feel impossible."

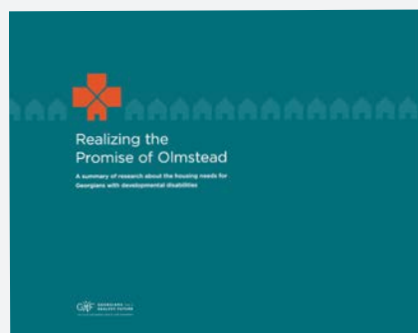
Paul Mikell, an essential worker from South Georgia, spent months trying to enroll in Medicaid through Georgia's new Pathways to Coverage program. Though eligible, he faced confusing updates, delays, and dead ends. When he finally cleared the red tape, Paul could affordably see a doctor again—for the first time in a long time.

His story highlights the needless complexity of Georgia's current system—and the difference that full Medicaid expansion could make for thousands more just like him.

Healthy Housing

Stable, affordable housing is foundational to health—and at GHF, we advocate for systems that make health possible beyond the doctor's office. GHF grew our Healthy Housing work by collaborating with a coalition of partners to secure three key policy wins:

» **Pay raises for Direct Support Professionals** Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) support people with disabilities so they can live healthily and independently at home. Pay raises were one of the policy recommendations that GHF called for in our 2022 “[Realizing the Promise of Olmstead](#)” report.

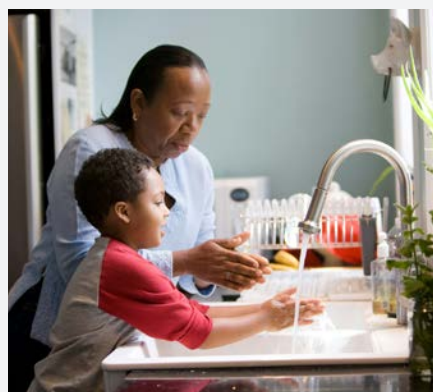


» **Safe at Home Act** The Safe at Home Act (HB 404) protects Georgia renters from unhealthy housing conditions and unfair eviction practices. GHF mobilized hundreds of Georgians in support of HB 404.

» **Protect the Low Income Housing Tax Credit** The Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) is a federal subsidy program that motivates investors and developers to build housing that is affordable to low- and modest-income families. Georgia matches 100% of the federal LIHTC, which GHF advocated to protect and maintain.

» **Educational materials** GHF produced several educational materials to help educate state leaders and every-day Georgians about important housing programs, why they're essential to the health of Georgia families, and the policy actions needed to support them:

- [Georgia Housing Voucher Program](#)
- [Georgia's Low Income Housing Tax Credit](#)



New! Partnering with caregivers:

GHF secured modest grant funding to partner with family caregivers, increasing awareness of their value to Georgia's health care and public health systems, identifying public policy opportunities to support their (usually unpaid) work, and elevating their voices in policy decisions.



FEATURE

Sherthea Jackson

“It’s a two-hour drive each way—just so my kids can see the doctor they need.”

For Sherthea Jackson, a mother navigating Georgia's Medicaid system, specialist care for her children comes with a heavy price: time, travel, and uncertainty. Rural doctor shortages mean that what should be routine care becomes a full-day journey. Her story is a powerful reminder that even when coverage exists, access does not always follow—and why GHF continues to push for policies that connect Georgians to care where they live.

Moving Mental Health Forward

In 2024, Georgians for a Healthy Future continued to support and promote the 2022 Georgia Mental Health Parity Act with the goal of maximizing the law's benefits for Georgians and their families.

» Georgia Mental Health Parity Day

GHF co-hosted the first annual Georgia Mental Health Parity Advocacy Day at the Capitol.

**HEALTH INSURANCE COVERS YOUR
MENTAL HEALTH**
IT'S NOW THE LAW

Image courtesy of The Carter Center.

» Partnership with the Carter Center

GHF collaborated with The Carter Center to launch a new consumer awareness campaign to help Georgians understand their rights and protections under the law and how to ensure their mental health care was covered as much as possible.

GHF leaders attended community roundtables in Albany and Savannah to hear feedback from community members about the campaign so it can be improved for future use.



» Promoting Consumer Rights

Also in collaboration with The Carter Center, GHF briefed officials at the Georgia Departments of Community Health and Insurance about how to improve implementation of the state parity law. GHF's work led to improvements in the information that the Department of Community Health shares with Georgia consumers about their parity rights and protections.

Watching out for Georgia consumers

After GHF called on the Georgia Department of Insurance to protect Georgia consumers from two health insurance enrollment companies that were identified as bad actors, DOI suspended the two companies from participating in the new Georgia Access marketplace. This protected Georgians from possible fraud and scams as they enrolled in health insurance.

FEATURE

Jessica Swillings

"Without Medicaid, I couldn't have gotten through my pregnancy, let alone my recovery."

For Jessica Swillings of Sandersville, Medicaid didn't just cover her medications—it kept her on the path to healing. As she navigated co-occurring mental health and substance use challenges, the support she received from Medicaid—especially during pregnancy—meant one less thing to worry about. No stress about how to pay for medications. No skipped appointments due to lack of transportation.

Jessica knows her story is a hopeful one, but not everyone is so lucky. That's why she speaks up—to close the coverage gap and help more Georgians get the care they deserve.



IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

In 2024, GHF made significant strides in advancing the health and well-being of all Georgians through data-driven advocacy and community engagement.

REACHED & SERVED

1,827

connections
with Georgians through
Navigator outreach
& assistance

1,000+

Georgians reached
through
Coverage Captains
education

3

**community round
tables**
facilitated (Albany,
Savannah, & Atlanta)

EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT

5

**high-priority
rural districts** were
represented by
constituents at
Cover Georgia's
Advocacy Day at
the Capitol

810+

**Georgians
mobilized** to
contact legislators
to request a
hearing about
closing Georgia's
coverage gap

1,100+

advocacy clicks generated
from 10 housing action alerts

1st

Mental Health Parity Day
at the Capitol co-hosted

POLICY & ADVOCACY

1st

ever legislative committee hearing
that considered how to close
Georgia's coverage gap

HB 404

Safe at Home Act (HB 404):
Protected tenants from unfair
housing conditions and eviction
practices.

SB 395

**Naloxone Access Expansion
(SB 395):** Increased access to
life-saving overdose reversal
medication across Georgia.

HB 1339

**Health Coverage Commission (HB
1339):** Created a new body to
examine and recommend ways to
expand and improve coverage for
low-income Georgians.



Completed a team expansion to 10
team members (from 7 in 2023)!



LOOKING AHEAD

While there is a lot to celebrate from 2024, we are clear-eyed about the challenges that surround Georgians in 2025. Proposed policy changes from Congress and sudden, seismic reshapings of the federal public health workforce and federal funding endanger many of the policies and programs that Georgians (sometimes unknowingly) rely on for our health, health care, and health coverage. In the face of such threats, GHF remains committed to doing what's right for the most important people in our state—Georgians and our families.

We remain steadfast in our vision of a Georgia where all residents have equitable opportunities to achieve their highest level of health.

To keep that vision as close as possible, GHF will continue to:

- » Listen closely to and amplify the voices of rural Georgians; Black and brown Georgians; low-income families; people with disabilities and chronic conditions; and any Georgian shouldering the burdens of unfair health care and coverage systems;
- » Build understanding among leaders and Georgians who do not yet support the public policies needed to realize a healthy, thriving Georgia;
- » Collaborate with partner organizations and community members to effectively maximize our collective expertise, skills, and resources for the benefit of Georgians; and
- » Loudly call for the evidence-based policy solutions that will best support and improve the health and well-being of Georgians.

We ask you to walk alongside us in these challenging times, just as you have when progress came easier.

Meet the 2024 GHF team

In fall 2024, GHF completed an organizational expansion (from 7 staff members to 10) and restructuring process. The process strengthens our ability to carry out high-quality advocacy and programmatic initiatives, and more effectively lead policy change for Georgians. The organizational changes were adopted along with our new tagline: “Healthier future, powered by people.”

Neima Abdulahi *Director of Strategic Engagement*

Knetta Adkins *Senior Coalitions Manager*

Laura Colbert *Executive Director*

Carmen Ervin *Impact Program Manager*

Whitney Griggs *Director of Health Policy*

Lois Hairston *Content Development Manager*

Anthony Hill *Strategic Communications Manager*

Melita Lewis *Health Insurance Navigator*

Daniel Nguyen *Administrative Assistant*

Courtney Stallworth *Deputy Director*

Deanna Williams *Health Insurance Navigator*



Your support makes our work possible!

GHF is deeply grateful to the individuals, organizations, and foundations who donated to GHF in 2024. We are incredibly appreciative of your generosity regardless of the size of your gift.

We would additionally like to thank those who gave their time, talents, expertise, and advocacy.

Thank you for all the ways that you give to GHF!

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Christine Wiggins

50 Hurt Plaza SE, Suite 1130

Atlanta, GA 30303

404-567-5016

info@healthyfuturega.org

healthyfuturega.org