

FAMILY & POLICY



AN ADVOCACY PROGRAM OF

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Calls Needed to Protect PeachCare and Medicaid!

The Senate Insurance & Labor Committee has [SB 92](#) (Hill, 32nd) on its agenda Tuesday, February 17th, 2:00 p.m., Mezzanine Room 1 in the Capitol. The bill attempts to change Georgia's cost-effective Medicaid and PeachCare coverage into premium assistance, forcing the state to purchase "benchmark" plans for many members. This would harm patients, reduce the proportion of taxpayer money that is actually spent for care, decrease public accountability, and add confusion and administrative burdens for providers. Click here for [I & L Committee](#) members. Please contact them now, and ask them to *vote no* on SB 92.

Federal Stimulus Aid for Georgia. Under the package President Obama will soon sign, the state will gain an estimated \$1.73 B over 9 quarters in additional federal Medicaid match, \$1.26 B in an education block grant and \$280.5 M in a flexible block grant. There are also provisions affecting food stamps, child care, unemployment insurance, and child and worker tax credits. For details, see [CBPP](#). Supporters hope these funds will help alleviate some budget cuts and boost the bad economy that has led to low state revenues.

Trauma System. [SB 156](#) (Staton, 18th) establishes a State Office of EMS/Trauma (under policy direction of the Ga. Trauma Care Network Commission) as the lead agency for trauma network development, operations, and evaluation and as the regulatory and administrative authority for the trauma network. It shifts the Commission's priority from compensating providers of trauma services to maintaining and expanding the trauma network, particularly in regions with the greatest need. It requires the Commission to adopt formal regulations under the state Administrative Procedures Act. SB 156 is not yet in a committee. Several other bills address trauma funding: [HB 148](#) (Scott, 153rd) would charge a \$10 fee on

passenger vehicles. [HB 183](#) (Geisinger, 48th) would charge fees to telephone and wireless subscribers. (Both are in House Ways & Means). [SR 277](#) (Goggans 7th) would amend the Constitution to earmark a \$10 fee on passenger vehicles for trauma. It is in Senate Finance.

Children. [HB 229](#) (Coleman, 97th), the Student Health and Physical Education (SHAPE) Act, is in the House Education Committee. It requires fitness assessments for students in grades 4-12 beginning in the 2011-12 school year. Schools will report aggregate results and will be required to offer at least a minimum amount of physical education. [SB 8](#) (Murphy, 27th) allows students to self-administer prescribed epinephrine. It has passed the Senate and is in House Health & Human Services. [HB 237](#) (Lindsey, 54th) addresses Adoption Assistance payments for families adopting children with special needs. It removes a requirement that the child would otherwise be in foster care and allows payments to begin when a child is placed by a public or private agency and agreements have been signed. A Children & Youth committee substitute limits financial assistance to what would have been paid for boarding the child in family foster care, plus medical and other special services. Legislation rewriting the Juvenile Code is expected soon, and is likely to be the subject of hearings this year.

DHR Reorganization. The House Appropriations Special Subcommittee on DHR Governance (1/30 Bulletin) held its public hearing on [HB 228](#) (Butler, 18th). Many advocates testified against eliminating the Commission on Family Violence, while others focused on needed improvements in mental health services and specific programs such as Babies Can't Wait. We understand the subcommittee is drafting a substitute that may place public health and mental health together, although we have not yet seen it.

Highlights

- The General Assembly has completed 18 legislative days.
- Congress reached agreement on a stimulus package that promises needed relief to Georgia.

Action needed! You can help!

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