

# FAMILY & POLICY



AN ADVOCACY PROGRAM OF

MARCH 20, 2009

**The House passed its version of the 2010 budget, making substantial changes from the Governor's proposals in some areas.** The House used additional American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds, employing them in part to alleviate some cuts.

**Human Resources.** The House appropriated over \$58 M more in ARRA funds for services such as time-limited child care, child support services, foster care and adoption, senior nutrition, and food banks. The House restored funds for child placement agency rates, almost \$2.5 M for health department grant-in-aid, \$100,000 for sexual assault centers and \$200,000 for family violence shelters. It added \$10 M for the trauma network. Many cuts the Governor proposed were not restored such as eliminating by attrition positions of benefits eligibility workers and cutting community support services for children, adolescents and adults; adult addictive disease services; supported employment; adult mental health; and vacant community care slots for people with developmental disabilities.

**Education.** The House restored all but \$900,000 of the \$30 M cut that would have eliminated the school nurse program, and it used \$25 M in ARRA funds to restore some of the cut to QBE.

**Community Health.** The House budget uses funds Gov. Perdue had allocated for expected Medicaid enrollment growth to restore the reimbursement cuts of 10% for hospitals and 6% for doctors, dentists and others. Perdue had proposed these cuts after he lowered revenue estimates and his proposed CMO and hospital fees (1/16 & 2/20 Bulletins) met resistance. Gov. Perdue issued a letter objecting to the House plan, saying it did not adequately provide for increased enrollment in Medicaid of people who are losing health coverage along with their jobs. Medicaid could run out of money before the end of the fiscal year, and there may not be sufficient revenues to handle the shortfall in an amended budget. The House

provided funds for DCH to adopt a family planning waiver to allow many women who otherwise would not have Medicaid to receive family planning services. It also provided \$8.8 M to nursing homes and did not adopt the Governor's proposal to raise state employees' shares of health premiums.

## Highlights

- Only 6 legislative days remain.
- The House passed its version of the 2010 budget, as Gov. Perdue objects to some of the significant changes from his revised proposal. The Senate will act on the budget the week of March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The Senate will act on the budget the week of February 23<sup>rd</sup>, and then House-Senate conferees will start to work out differences.

**Following is an update on some of the bills affecting families.** A substitute to **HB 228** (Butler, 18<sup>th</sup>) reorganizing DHR will be debated on the Senate floor Monday and

likely will go to a conference committee. The committee substitute restores the Governor's original plan to join public health and DCH in a new Health Department, but places Developmental Disabilities in the new Department of Behavioral Health as opposed to leaving it in the reconstituted Department of Human Services. **HB 385** (Hill, 180<sup>th</sup>) making permanent the Commission on Family Violence is in the Senate Government Oversight Committee. **HB 229** (Coleman, 97<sup>th</sup>), the Student Health and Physical Education (SHAPE) Act, passed the Senate 34-14 and has been sent to the Governor. **HB 193** (Graves, 12<sup>th</sup>) changing the 180-day school year to a requirement that students attend for a number of hours equivalent to 180 days (perhaps allowing 4-day school weeks) is in the Senate Education and Youth Committee. **HB 254** (Peake, 137<sup>th</sup>) allowing DFCS 30 days instead of 90 days to identify adult relatives who may be able to care for a child removed from his or her home is in the Senate Judiciary Committee. **SB 165** (Goggans, 7<sup>th</sup>) requiring DCH to verify Medicaid and PeachCare applicants' income with the Revenue Department was favorably reported by the House Insurance Committee. Advocates are working for legislation that would enable individuals who are laid off by small firms to benefit from federal COBRA premium subsidies available under ARRA.

## Action needed! You can help!

Locate your State Representative and Senator: [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org) (Check your driver's license for 9-digit zip code.)

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