



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



**March 8, 2024**

Welcome to GHLA @ the Capitol, your weekly update about news you need to know related to Georgia's lodging industry and the 2024 General Assembly.

GHLA's legislative team will be your eyes and ears under the Gold Dome.

## Legislative Schedule

The legislature met Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday of this week for Legislative Days 29-32. Wednesday served as a committee workday. This was a slower week at the Capitol following Crossover Day last week.

Click [here](#) to see the rest of the legislative calendar. The legislature will reconvene on Monday, March 11th for LD 33.

## Human Trafficking Prevention



*GHLA's Chris Hardman testifies in support of Senate Bill 512 - "On behalf of GHLA and our friends at AAHOA and AHLA, we echo our unwavering support for Senate Bill 512 and ask the committee to vote yes on this important legislation."*

**SB512** by Sen. Shawn Still creates the Victims of Human Trafficking Fund and the Victims of Human Trafficking Fund Commission, as well as creates Human Trafficking training programs for lodging businesses. Most notably to our industry is the section regarding Human Trafficking prevention training. GHLA worked closely with the author, Senator Shawn Still, and house sponsor, Representative Deborah Silcox, on a friendly and necessary amendment to include all lodging businesses, including short term rentals, while adding a good faith clause to provide necessary liability protection for hoteliers. Your Georgia Hotel & Lodging Association and on behalf of our friends at the Asian American Hotel Owners Association and the American Hotel & Lodging Association testified in committee and gave our unwavering support for the amendment and SB512 as amended. A video feed of the hearing can be found [here](#). GHLA is proud to report that SB512 was amended and passed unanimously out of House Judiciary Non-Civil Subcommittee this week and is expected to be heard in full committee next week. GHLA has been working tirelessly to perfect this legislation and will continue to work closely with the author and house sponsor as it moves through the legislative process. We are grateful to Senator Still and Representative Silcox for moving this important legislation forward.

### **FY25 Budget Passes the House**

The FY25 proposed budget, **HB916**, passed the House this week with a vote of 172-1 and was immediately transferred to the Senate. The \$36.1 billion budget prioritizes healthcare, public safety and education. This is the largest budget Georgia has seen with an increase of \$3.6 billion from FY24. The governor also included adjustments to give state employees and teachers a cost of living salary increase to help with retention and battle staffing shortages. The budget is the only piece of legislation that the General Assembly is constitutionally obligated to pass each session.

The House made 1,170 line changes to the Governor's budget, and now the Senate will have the opportunity to make further adjustments. The House approved significant investments in healthcare, including \$146 million for full funding of three provider rate studies, \$27 million in Medicaid provider rate adjustments, and \$8.9 million for a 3% provider increase for child caring institutions - just to highlight a few.

In terms of education, the House has allocated full funding for the HOPE scholarship, teacher salary increases, and nearly \$100 million in funding for increased school security. Georgia Pre-K class sizes will begin reducing from 22 students to 20 thanks to a \$9.5 million grant from the state lottery funds. The House also included \$6.3 million to fund literacy coaches in Georgia schools and \$1.5 million for dyslexia screenings for students k-3.

Perhaps the largest budget allocations went to the Department of Transportation with \$2.4 billion being appropriated for infrastructure projects around the state.

### **High Demand Careers**

**HB982** by Rep. Gambill passed out of the Senate Higher Education Committee on Wednesday. This legislation builds upon the High Demand Career Initiative under

Governor Deal and will empower the State Workforce Investment Board to partner with the employers. The high demand career list will help state and local education agencies to focus education and career pathways into filling those high demand jobs. This was one of the recommendations from the Joint Study Committee on Dual Enrollment for Highly Skilled Talent at Younger Ages (SR175) from last year. This bill will not require annual legislation to update the high demand career list, the board will have the ability to make changes and keep the list dynamic to the needs of the state.

### **Savannah Convention Bureau**

[HB1041](#) by Rep. Ron Stephens would allow the Savannah Convention Center Authority to increase their bonding from \$50 million to \$400 million, matching the World Congress Center Authority. Having generated hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue since opening in 2000, The Convention Center would like to sell private bonds to fund the construction of a new hotel at the center. This bill was voted out of the Senate Economic Development & Tourism Committee with unanimous support.

### **Legislative Tracking Update**

#### **House Bills**

[HB1386](#) - Commerce and trade; surcharges charged by merchants for purchasers' use of credit cards; limit amount

[HB1405](#) - Property; landlord and tenant; comprehensive list of any existing damage; provisions

[HB1410](#) - State Housing Trust Fund for the Homeless Act; enact

[HB1415](#) - Law enforcement officers; cooperate with federal authorities on enforcement of immigration laws; provisions

[HB1416](#) - Property; duty of habitability for certain rental agreements; provide

[HB1418](#) - Community Affairs, Department of; create Office of Urban Affairs

[HB1425](#) - Weeping Time Cultural Heritage Corridor Authority; create

[HB1426](#) - Crimes and offenses; criminal trespass; provide for additional acts

[HB1431](#) - Income tax credit; film; certain qualified productions that are shot in certain rural counties; provide additional credit

[HB1432](#) - Commissioner of Labor; state administered guest worker program; provide

[HB1440](#) - Richard H. Smith Georgia CHIPS Advancement in Research and Economic Development Act; enact

#### **House Resolutions**

[HR1255](#) - House Study Committee on Combating Human Trafficking in Major Transportation Areas; create

[HR1257](#) - Joint Study Committee on Combating Homelessness Among Veterans; create

[HR1298](#) - Georgia Environmental Protection Division; protect Georgia's groundwater; urge

[HR1301](#) - Georgia Environmental Protection Division and DeKalb County government; resolve sewage pollution and spills; urge

### **Senate Bills**

[SB559](#) - Counties, Municipal Corporations, and other Governmental Entities; sovereign and governmental immunities for violation on the prohibition on immigration sanctuary policies; waive

### **Senate Resolutions**

[SR677](#) - Senate Credit Card Fees on State Sales and Excise Tax and Their Impact on Georgia Merchants and Consumers Study Committee; create

[SR678](#) - Clean Energy; creation of thriving-wage green jobs, and an equitable clean energy transition; support state goal

### **GHLA Full Legislative Tracking Update**

Please [click here to go to our Legislative tracking page](#) for the complete list of bills we are watching.