OVERVIEW

• Legislative Process
• Budget Cycle and Highlights
• 2017 Legislation Recap
• Looking Ahead to 2018
• Engaging Legislators
LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- Bicameral
  - 56 Senators and 180 Representatives
  - Lt. Gov. presides over Senate
  - Speaker presides over House
- Citizen Legislators
- Biennial Session
- Meets for 40 Days, beginning 2nd Monday in January
  - Day 28 is Crossover Day
- Only legislation required to pass each year is the state budget
  - Governor-strong state
HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

How a Bill is Passed in the Georgia Legislature

HOW TO STAY INFORMED:

• Barton Child Law and Policy Center at Emory Law School
  – Barton Newsletter and weekly Legislative Updates

• Voices for Georgia’s Children
  – Georgia CASA “Closed Door” weekly meetings
  – Legislative Update
  – Two-Minute Take

• Legislator Newsletters
WHO IS MY LEGISLATOR?

• Enter your zip code online at http://votesmart.org/ or http://openstates.org/ga/legislators/

HOW DO I FIND THE BILLS?

• www.legis.ga.gov

2017 RECAP

• First year of session
• More budget advocacy than substantive legislation
• Prevalent topics
  – Juvenile court judges salaries
  – Campus carry
  – Adoptions and religious freedom
  – Expanding SB 440 crimes
BUDGET CYCLE & HIGHLIGHTS

STEPS IN GEORGIA’S BUDGET PROCESS

1. Budget Request Instructions Sent to Agencies:
   In early summer, the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) sends guidelines to agencies for budget requests.

2. Agencies Prepare Budget Request:
   Agencies prepare requests and get board approval if applicable.

3. Budget Request Submitted:
   Agencies submit all requests for current and upcoming fiscal year to OPB by September 1.

4. Budget Request Analyzed:
   The governor, OPB staff, and agency business review and assess current and new budget requests.

5. Governor Finishes Budget:
   By the end of the calendar year, the governor finishes the budget process.

6. Budget Documents Sent to the General Assembly:
   In January, within the first five days of the General Assembly session, the governor presents the budget proposal.
Legislative Appropriations Process:
The Appropriations committees in the Georgia House of Representatives and Senate hold budget hearings for the current and upcoming fiscal year.

House Approves Its Budget:
The House votes on changes to governor’s budget proposal, passes its version to the Senate.

Senate Approves Its Budget:
The Senate reviews the House-passed budget for the current and upcoming fiscal years, makes changes, then votes on its version.

Conference Committee Meets:
The lieutenant governor and Speaker of the House appoint a conference committee to negotiate a single version of the budget.

Final Version Approved:
The House and the Senate each vote to approve the final version.

Appropriations Bill Sent to Governor:
The governor has 40 days from the end of the legislative session to sign the budget bill into law and may veto specific parts of it.

Source: Georgia Budget and Policy Institute Budget Primer
**FY 2018 BUDGET**

- **DHS/DFCS**
  - $31 million total public funds, including approximately $26 million in state funds, to increase child welfare services worker salaries by 19%
  - Nearly $4 million total public funds, including $2.9 million in state funds, for 80 additional foster care support services employees
  - $500,000 increase to CASA to increase the program’s statewide capacity
  - $300,000 to increase DFCS SAAG compensation to $57.50 per hour
  - $2.5 million for 25 additional human resource employees to meet recruitment demands
  - $20.2 million to support growth in foster care
  - $10.7 million to increase the foster parent per diem by 57%
  - Almost $15 million for the first installment of a two-year plan to increase the relative foster care provider per diem rates by $10
  - $5.2 million for the first installment of a two-year plan to increase child placement agency foster parent per diem rates by $10

- $104,024 to increase funds to document the institutional technical knowledge of CPRS
- $795,000 to Council of Juvenile Court Judges for salary increase for judges

**FY 2018 BUDGET, CONT’D.**

- **Criminal Justice Coordinating Council:**
  - $656,000 for the Accountability Court Program to expand and create family dependency treatment courts
  - Almost $65,000 for the Accountability Court Program to expand and create juvenile accountability courts
  - A $340,000 increase for the Juvenile Justice Incentive Grants, which support evidence-based community alternatives to detention, and for personnel for one new fidelity manager

- **Georgia Public Defender Council:**
  - $800,000 to align the salary scale of public defenders with prosecuting attorneys
  - $782,000 for 10 additional juvenile public defenders
  - $307,000 to annualize 15 juvenile public defender positions

- 243,000 to annualize 10 ADA positions to support juvenile courts statewide
- 300,000 to DOE for statewide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) trainers
2017 PASSED LEGISLATION

- HB 5: increases compensation for juvenile court judges by increasing the state grant awarded to each judicial circuit from $85,000 to $100,000. Salaries for part-time judges are also adjusted upward.
- HB 86: relates to the mandatory reporting of child abuse and expands the definition of sexual abuse to include sex trafficking.
- SB 168: allows access to child abuse records in the Central Child Abuse Registry by the department or a county, state, or local agency investigating allegations of child abuse and to certain child-placing entities conducting foster and adoptive parent background checks.
2017 PASSED LEGISLATION

• SB 175 -- in any CHINS or delinquency case, or when a case plan has been imposed through a community based risk reduction program, the court may issue an order controlling the conduct of the child’s parent, guardian or custodian in order to promote the child’s treatment, rehabilitation and welfare, after notice and an opportunity to be heard has been given.
  – When entering an order, the court must consider the child’s best interests, the risk to public safety, evidence of a repeated pattern of behavior, and the extent to which enhanced supervision of the child may improve public safety concerns.
  – Order may require a parent to ensure the child attends school, monitors the child’s homework, attends school meetings, participates in counseling or treatment, provides transportation to court-ordered services, prohibits the child from having contact with certain other people, and pays for the costs of the child’s counseling, treatment or services, restitution, or other judgment.
• amends provisions relating to incompetent children

“BACK THE BADGE” – PASSED, SB 160

• Amended both the definition of a Class A designated felony and the code section on concurrent and original jurisdiction of the superior court, to add aggravated assault with a firearm against a public safety officer and aggravated battery upon a public safety officer to the list of offenses for which a child 13-17 year olds can be prosecuted and sentenced as an adult.
• The bill gives discretion to the superior court to transfer such cases back to juvenile court
• Defines "public safety officer" to include existing as well as new definitions of correctional officer, emergency health worker, firefighter, and highway emergency response operator.
2017 PASSED LEGISLATION

- SB 174 enacts reforms recommended by Criminal Justice Reform Council
- SB 174 relating to family treatment courts:
  - adds DFCS employees to the required membership of family treatment court division planning groups
  - provides that cases proceeding in the family treatment court division are subject to the periodic review process established for dependency proceedings
  - relating to dispositions for a dependent child, provides that a court may order that legal custody of a child deemed dependent because of parental substance abuse may not be restored to the parent unless such parent undergoes substance abuse treatment and random screenings for 12 months or successfully completes a family treatment court division program. Finally,
  - relating to county DFCS functions, is amended to require local DFCS offices to collaborate with the family treatment court division planning group and establish a written protocol for assessing cases for possible referral.

2017 PASSED LEGISLATION

- SB 186 (HB 331) authorizes a kinship caregiver (grandparent, great-grandparent, aunt, uncle, great aunt, great uncle, cousin, sibling, or fictive kin), who is raising a child in an informal, noncustodial, or guardianship capacity, to give legal consent for the child to receive educational services, medical services related to academic enrollment, or participate in curricular or extracurricular activities by executing an affidavit. The substance of HB 331 was amended to SB 186, relating to the Hope Scholarship.
2017 PASSED LEGISLATION

• HB 154 allows licensed dental hygienists in certain school settings to perform certain applications under general supervision, with written permission of the student's parent or guardian.
  – They may also, without prior written permission of the student's parent or guardian, provide oral hygiene instruction and counseling.
  – School settings shall include only schools that are Title I schools, in which at least 65% of the student population is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under federal guidelines, Head Start programs, and Georgia’s Pre-K Program.
  – ‘General supervision’ means that a licensed dentist has authorized appropriate duties of a licensed dental hygienist but does not require that a licensed dentist be present when such duties are performed.

• SB 16 adds Autism Spectrum Disorder, Tourette's syndrome, Epidermolysis bullosa, Alzheimer's disease, Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), and Peripheral neuropathy to the list of conditions which may be treated with low THC oil.

• SB 201 “Family Care Act”- requires an employer of 25 or more individuals that provides sick leave to allow an employee to use such sick leave for the care of an immediate family member.

• SB 206 “Hearing Aid Coverage for Children Act.”- Requires private health insurance plans to cover the costs for hearing aids for children under 19 years old. The cost cannot exceed $3,000.00 per hearing aid. The plans must also cover replacement hearing aids every 48 months or sooner if the aid fails to work for certain reasons.

• HB 250 allows an employee of an early care and education program who has received a satisfactory fingerprint records check determination within the previous 12 months to be exempt from submitting applications for an additional background check for purposes of providing care to children placed in a foster home.

• HB 280 authorizes the carrying and possession of handguns by weapons carry license holders on any public technical school, vocational school, college, or university, or other public institution of postsecondary education.
  – Handguns may NOT be carried in certain locations on these properties, including buildings or property used for athletic sporting events or student housing, and preschool space.
2017—INTRODUCED, NOT PASSED

• HB 159 would have substantially revised general provisions applicable to adoptions, including allowing a nonresident to allow an adoption of his or her child, adoption of foreign-born children, waiver to revoke a surrender of parental rights, the age for individuals to access the Adoption Reunion Registry, and the annulment of an adoption under certain circumstances.

• Amendments would have permitted licensed child placing agencies operating under state contracts to refuse foster care and adoption referrals and services on the basis of their stated missions.

• Without the controversial amendments, it was subsequently amended to SB 130, which was recommitted to the Senate Judiciary Committee after additional attempts to amend it were made on the Senate floor.

2017—INTRODUCED, NOT PASSED

• HB 330 relates to a diligent search for relatives by DFCS and specifies additional information to be provided in the notice, including the contact information for a caseworker qualified to assist a kinship caregiver or the contact information for a county or district director, and any financial assistance available through any pilot program or for any kinship care arrangements.

• HB 359 -- “Supporting and Strengthening Families Act.” would have allowed a parent to delegate caregiving authority without court approval to a grandparent, step-grandparent, aunt, uncle, great aunt, great uncle, cousin, sibling or to an individual associated with a licensed child placing agency or non-profit focused on child and family services in good standing with the IRS for up to one year by executing a power of attorney that conforms to the form set forth in statute without approval of a court. VETOED.
2017—INTRODUCED, NOT PASSED

- SB 130 related to the right to an attorney in juvenile court proceedings, specifying that waivers of counsel must be made knowingly, voluntarily, and on the record. Would not have included waiver by a child. Passed the House committee with substituted, additional language from SB 131, which was to amend the juvenile code relating to appeals, providing that the appeal of a termination of parental rights order shall stay an adoption proceeding and required the juvenile court to continue to conduct hearings while the appeal is pending.

- The House passed a substitute version of the bill, which included the substance of HB 159, not including the controversial amendments adopted by the Senate Judiciary Committee. SB 130 was sent back to the Senate Judiciary Committee after attempts were made to amend the bill on the Senate floor.

2017—NOT PASSED

- SB 170 would have directed DFCS, in consultation with its residential child care licensing unit and with child placing agencies, to establish a uniform system for the approval of volunteers to provide appropriate services, including babysitting and mentoring of youth, to children in foster care as well as to foster parents.

- HB 53 introduced by Representative Oliver to raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from children under 17 years of age to children under 18 years of age.
LOOKING AHEAD TO 2018

2018

• Governor Deal’s last year
• Juvenile Code Assessment Project
• Comprehensive child welfare package
  – Attorneys in fact/ caregiver power of attorneys
• Adoptions
• Religious freedom
• Elections
• GA CASA strategy
  – Engaging the next generation of leaders in supporting CASA
EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

- Plan ahead
- Honest and direct, concise
- Passionate, persistent, polite, positive
- Personalize issues
- Show appreciation
- Seize opportunity
- Work both sides of the aisle
- Not just during the session
MESSAGING

• CASA advocacy is essential to abused and neglected children in Georgia.
  – Every abused and neglected child needs the individualized attention and sense of urgency that a CASA volunteer brings in promoting a child’s safety, permanency, and well-being
  – Studies have consistently shown that a child with a CASA is more likely to find a safe, permanent home; half as likely to re-enter foster care; and less likely to languish in long-term foster care
  – CASA volunteers provide consistency and continuity for a child involved in the child welfare system and help to connect information among DFCS staff, foster placements, providers, schools and many other stakeholders
  – CASA program helps to maximize community resources and support by involving community volunteers in supporting juvenile courts and children/families in foster care, resulting in additional resources, expertise and connections for children, families and services
• CASAs advocate for approximately 55% of children in foster care
• GA CASA has a statewide 3 year growth plan to dramatically increase the number of foster children with a CASA by 30%

MESSAGING

• State funding supports the recruitment, screening and training of CASA by providing 1 staff to supervise 30 volunteers
• CASA network’s current operating budget is approximately $12-13 million, including state appropriations of $3.37 million
• CASA is an exemplary public-private partnership that demonstrates a 75 to 1 return on investment
  – State funding represents approximately 20-25% of the program’s annual budget in GA
COMMUNICATIONS WITH LEGISLATORS

• Phone Calls
  – Likely will speak with an assistant, intern, or staffer who will relay your message
  – Identify yourself, organizational affiliation, and mention if you live in the legislator’s home district
  – Explain why you’re calling and make your ask, have 1-2 concise points to support your position
  – Provide any local or personal examples of why it matters
  – Thank the person for their time

• Email
  – Convenient, but may be less effective because less personal, may be preferred method for some
  – Put your position in the subject line (Please support GA CASA Budget Request)
  – Identify yourself, organizational affiliation, and mention if you live in the legislator’s home district
  – Form letters won’t have same weight as personalized
  – One issue per letter
  – State purpose in first paragraph
  – Include personal stories, highlight specific examples that support your position, including local impact
  – May request a response asking whether legislator will support your position

2018 CASA DAY AT THE CAPITOL

SAVE THE DATE!!

Wednesday, February 14, 2018
The Freight Room at The Depot
THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS??
ATYNER@GACASA.ORG  404-874-2888