



[History Chart](#)

Happy second week of the 2026 Georgia Legislative Session!

This week was budget week, where joint appropriations meetings in the House and Senate took place from Tuesday to Thursday. See the agenda and video link [here](#).

General

Secretary of State Hearing

The Secretary of State, Brad Raffensperger, spoke about the changes in the budget. For the 2026 adjusted fiscal recommendations, there has been 6.8 million added to the elections portion. Due to the passage of SB189 in the 2024 legislative session, 1.8 million will be utilized for text-based ballot scanning technology for vote tabulation for the purposes of verification. 5 million will be going to hand-recount ballots in the upcoming 2026 statewide election. The only races that will be hand-counted will be the gubernatorial and the lieutenant gubernatorial.

To note, Brad Raffensperger is running for Governor in this election. He answered a handful of tough questions from Senator Dolezal and Senator Tillery, both running for Lieutenant Governor, about the 5 million allotted to the hand recount, as well as the technology that will be utilized for counting ballots.

For the recommendations for FY2027, the only significant change is the \$200,000 and \$243,000 being decreased in elections and investigations respectively due to the change in the State Health Benefit Plan.

Department of Insurance and Fire Safety Hearing

The Department has collected \$1.7 billion in premium tax revenue. Out of the revenue that is collected, 57% going to cities and counties, and 43% to the state treasury. Insurance fraud is the second most costly white-collar crime in America, and Georgia is ranked 3rd in the nation. For the upcoming FIFA tournament, the Department is working closely with the Congress Center for fire safety. The state of reinsurance was designed to reduce insurance premiums and increase healthcare affordability. Additionally, Georgia Access launched as the state's official healthcare insurance marketplace; during open enrollment, over 1.3 million Georgians signed up for coverage, with 190,000 being new enrollees.

For the 2026 adjusted fiscal year, the Department is removing \$3 million in state funds from Administration and Enforcement programs. They also asked for continued support in the reinsurance program by investing \$120.9 million. For the fiscal year 2027, the Department has requested no additional funds or changes, but wants continued support of the reinsurance program by investing \$145.8 million.

Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA) Hearing

98% of GEMA funding comes from federal grants. The state funds are essential to meet federal matching requirements. The federal grant structure changes created new fiscal challenges: grant period shortened from three years to one year and funds must be expended by September 30th, 2026.

Due to these challenges for the 2026 adjusted fiscal year, the department recommends \$5.7M to meet federal Emergency Management Performance Grant

recommends \$5.7M to meet federal Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) match requirements. They also recommended \$9.9 million for GECA Next Generation 911 GIS buildout to add to the existing \$5 million allocation. This will fund the first two years and replace analog 911 infrastructure that has been in place since 1968 with IP-based and broadband-enabled technology. Additionally, \$1 million will be transferred from DPS for Protection of Communities Grant Program. This is administered alongside the Federal Nonprofit Security Grant Program to support safety for at-risk communities.

For the fiscal year 2027, the agency recommends \$1.429M to meet federal matching requirements. They also recommend transferring \$1 million from GBI for gang case management system support and ask for a continuation of the \$1 million DPS transfer from AFY 2026.

Department of Public Safety Hearing

The 2025 position count of the department has 864 troopers, 222 CVE officers, 22 Capitol police officers, and 147 dispatchers.

For the adjusted 2026 fiscal year, the department recommends \$1 million being transferred to GEMA for Protection of Communities Grant Program. They also recommended \$180,000 being put for ballistic helmet radio patches. They have Capital Projects they are working on and requested \$16M for replacement/outfitting of 215 vehicles statewide and \$15M for design, construction, and equipment of a new K-9 facility at HQ.

For the fiscal year 2027, the department recommends \$731,357 for law enforcement officer retirement enhancement and \$59,300 for GA@WORK billings. The department also recommended a reduction of \$28,932 in DOAS insurance programs and a \$8.5 million decrease for SHBP decrease. For the Capital Projects they anticipate \$1.4M for major facility maintenance and repairs statewide, \$600,000 for aviation fleet maintenance and repairs statewide, \$2.335M for replacement of 400 taser, \$3M for design and construction of a new state patrol facility for LaFayette Post 41, \$115,000 for furniture, fixtures, and equipment for Swainsboro Post, and \$115,000 for furniture, fixtures, and equipment for Sylvania Post.

Healthcare

Department of Behavioral Health and Development Disabilities Hearing

The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities had its appropriations meeting. They shared that earlier this week, the Department was officially released from a major provision of the 2010 U.S. DOJ settlement. The only remaining requirement is that Georgia needs to add 404 new housing vouchers. The budget has allotted \$9.3 million for those vouchers.

The NOW/COMP Medicaid waivers have 4,505 individuals enrolled, and a DOA audit found that there were no deficient findings. To continue to have no deficient findings, the Department wants a new assessment tool that would prioritize face-to-face interviews and create a three-tier planning list.

Georgia has also issued more than 2,400 adult pre-trial evaluations and 1,400 juvenile evaluations to see if defendants are competent to stand trial, and that number has been rising annually. The Department has projected that state psychiatric hospitals will reach full capacity by 2034. Due to this, they would like to build more. Dodge County has built the first jail restoration center in Georgia, and that has provided a system where the incarcerated spend fewer days in jail and are able to receive faster resolutions. These programs are being launched to help reduce pressure on hospital beds.

AFY 2026 Adjustments

- \$20.7 million for a new jail restoration facility in August to reduce jail backlogs and protect hospital capacity
 - They have a workforce facility and a building that they are ready to expand into
- Reducing \$142,000 for addictive disease for expanding Hep C screening
- Increasing \$243,000 for Cobb County jail competency restoration

FY 2027 Adjustment

- Decreasing telecommunications and infrastructure rates for Georgia Technology Authority
- Reducing funds to reflect a reduction in the employer contribution for the state health benefit plan for 29.54% to 20.64%
- Decreasing \$2.8 million to reflect the adjustment in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP)
- \$2.3 million to increase funds for the mobile crisis team for mental health and \$2.9 million for the 988 hotline → \$1 saved in crisis saves \$23 in hospital charges
 - The hotline averages 1000 calls/texts a day
- \$1.1 million increase in funds to the operational cost of the new Gateway child stabilization unit in Savannah as a state-wide facility

Department of Community Health Hearing

The Department of Community Health is working to be in compliance with HR1, the One Big Beautiful Bill. Georgia will have to make changes regarding eligibility and the technology they use; the final changes will be released before May. Medicare Advantage has completed procurement and issued new providers and rates for the upcoming year. The Department has also received approval for certified community health centers and therapeutic care. In lieu of service is currently waiting for CMS approval, and all of the state amendments for the FY2026 rate increase are also pending CMS approval.

The Department has received a \$218 million grant from the federal government to go towards rural health transformation. The intent is to change the reimbursement problem in Georgia to become more sustainable as well as incentives healthcare workers to practice in rural Georgia.

AFY 2026 Recommendations

- Reduction in medicaid benefits based on lower utilization than initially projected

- Increasing funds for the harmless provision in Medicare Part B

FY 2027 Recommendations

- Increase funds for skilled nursing centers
- Reduce funds for growth in Medicaid based on projected utilization
- Increase funds for the harmless provision in medicare part b
- Reduce funds for new high-cost drugs based on projected utilization
- Reduce funds for FMAP savings from FY 2026 provider rate enhancements
- Replace the nursing home provider fee with the state general plan
- The projected expense for the state health benefit plan is higher than the cost

Department of Human Services Hearing

Georgia serves more kids with youth with emotional disturbance than the national proportion. The Department has seen the number of kids in foster care decreasing, but the budget for foster kids has been increasing significantly. There has been a growth in the program budget, and they can't control all of their costs. The primary cost driver that they have noticed is the court-ordered services. The Department has to spend money to address its non-compliance because it is not following court orders that it deems unnecessary or unsafe. Additionally, the Department will have to pay if others are noncompliant with the court orders. In Henry County, there is a judge who will call the CPS hotline to request parental drug screens even if substance abuse is not a concern. The parents are not compliant with the drug screening, and then the Department will have to pay for it regardless. The other cost drivers that they outline are insurance/placement providers, emergency grants, healthcare costs, federal shutdown, employee turnover, and transportation.

AFY 2026 Recommendations

- Increase \$2.6 million to maintain software applications for Georgia

Technology Authority mainframe for the child support enforcement platform

- Transfer \$371,000 to the child welfare service program budget
- Increase \$6.2 million for Gateway system modifications to reduce SNAP payment error rate and ensure federal compliance (HR 1)
- \$41.5 million increase for utilization growth and increased costs of care (out-of-home care/foster care)

FY 2027 Recommendations

- \$3.6 million to keep the child support technology mainframe updated
- \$456,000 to judicial circuit contracts to restore FY2021 budget reductions
- \$5.9 million to SNAP reimbursement from 50% to 25% from federal funds
- \$40 million for SNAP funds
- \$12 million to fund payment accuracy for SNAP
- \$250,000 to eliminate funds to place foster youth closer to their biological family
- \$371,000 decrease from out-of-home care to child welfare
- \$21 million for the increased cost of care and transfer funds for the safe harbor for sexually exploited children fund

Department of Public Health Hearing

The Department of Public Health's core services revolve around immunization, women's health services, STD services, HIV services, TB services, septic, environmental health services, and children's services. 50% of the budget is federally funded, and that goes toward women and children, particularly the nutrition program. 49% of the state budget is for general grant-in-aid to county health Departments. The Department additionally has an autism program that works in tandem with the child program.

AFY 2026 Recommendations

- \$11 million to increase funds for full-time regular state employees

FY 2027 Recommendations

- \$2 million for the infant and children essential health treatment services; expands home visiting to 21 counties, with a focus on rural counties that have a high incidence of preterm births, low birth weights, and Medicaid-covered births
- Georgia Public Health Laboratory is a no-cost budget item, but will be \$24 million
 - They do newborn screening for every baby born in Georgia
 - They are the only lab in the state that is authorized to do these tests