

Senate Bill 352

By: Senators Unterman of the 45th, Burke of the 11th, Hufstetler of the 52nd, Kirkpatrick of the 32nd, Sims of the 12th and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 1 of Chapter 1 of Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,  
2 relating to general provisions relative to health, so as to prohibit patient brokering; to provide  
3 for definitions; to provide for exceptions; to provide for penalties; to create a director of  
4 Substance Abuse, Addiction, and Related Disorders; to provide for appointment; to provide  
5 for qualifications; to establish the Commission on Substance Abuse and Recovery; to provide  
6 for membership; to provide for duties; to amend Chapter 1 of Title 33 of the Official Code  
7 of Georgia Annotated, relating to general provisions relative to insurance, so as to provide  
8 for a fraudulent insurance act for the excessive, high-tech, or fraudulent drug testing of  
9 certain individuals; to provide for investigation by the Commissioner; to provide for  
10 penalties; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

11 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

12 style="text-align:center">**SECTION 1.**

13 Article 1 of Chapter 1 of Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to  
14 general provisions relative to health, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as  
15 follows:

16 "31-1-16.

17 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

18 (1) 'Health care provider or health care facility' means:

19 (A) Any person licensed under Chapter 9, 10A, 11, 11A, 26, 28, 30, 33, 34, 35, 39,  
20 or 44 of Title 43 or any hospital, nursing home, home health agency, institution, or  
21 medical facility licensed or defined under Chapter 7 of Title 31. The term shall also  
22 include any corporation, professional corporation, partnership, limited liability  
23 company, limited liability partnership, authority, or other entity composed of such  
24 health care providers;

25 (B) Any state owned or state operated hospital, community mental health center, or  
26 other facility utilized for the diagnosis, care, treatment, or hospitalization of persons

27 who are alcoholics, drug dependent individuals, or drug abusers and any other hospital  
 28 or facility within the State of Georgia approved for such purposes by the Department  
 29 of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities;

30 (C) Community mental health center as defined in Code Section 37-7-1;

31 (D) Any medicaid provider as defined in Code Section 49-4-146.1;

32 (E) A state or local health department;

33 (F) Any community service provider contracting with any state entity to furnish  
 34 alcohol, drug abuse, or mental health services; and

35 (G) Any substance abuse service provider licensed under Chapter 5 of Title 26.

36 (2) 'Health care provider network entity' means a corporation, partnership, or limited  
 37 liability company owned or operated by two or more health care providers or health care  
 38 facilities and organized for the purpose of entering into agreements with health insurers,  
 39 health care purchasing groups, or Medicaid or medicare.

40 (3) 'Health insurer' means an accident and sickness insurer, health care corporation,  
 41 health maintenance organization, provider sponsored health care corporation, or any  
 42 similar entity regulated by the Commissioner of Insurance.

43 (b) It shall be unlawful for any person, including any health care provider or health care  
 44 facility, to:

45 (1) Offer to pay a commission, benefit, bonus, rebate, kickback, or bribe, directly or  
 46 indirectly, in cash or in kind, or engage in any split-fee arrangement, in any form, to  
 47 induce the referral of a patient or patronage to or from a health care provider or health  
 48 care facility;

49 (2) Solicit or receive a commission, benefit, bonus, rebate, kickback, or bribe, directly  
 50 or indirectly, in cash or in kind, or engage in any split-fee arrangement, in any form, in  
 51 return for the referral of a patient or patronage to or from a health care provider or health  
 52 care facility;

53 (3) Solicit or receive a commission, benefit, bonus, rebate, kickback, or bribe, directly  
 54 or indirectly, in cash or in kind, or engage in any split-fee arrangement, in any form, in  
 55 return for the acceptance or acknowledgment of treatment from a health care provider or  
 56 health care facility; or

57 (4) Aid, abet, advise, or otherwise participate in the conduct prohibited by this  
 58 subsection.

59 (c) This Code section shall not apply to:

60 (1) Any discount, payment, waiver of payment, or payment practice not prohibited by 42  
 61 U.S.C. Section 1320a-7b(b) or any fraternal benefit society providing health benefits to  
 62 its members as authorized pursuant to Chapter 15 of Title 33;

- 63 (2) Any payment, compensation, or financial arrangement within a group practice as  
64 defined in Code Section 43-1B-3, provided such payment, compensation, or arrangement  
65 is not to or from persons who are not members of the group practice;
- 66 (3) Payments to a health care provider or health care facility for professional consultation  
67 services;
- 68 (4) Commissions, fees, or other remuneration lawfully paid to insurance agents as  
69 provided under Title 33;
- 70 (5) Payments by a health insurer who reimburses, provides, offers to provide, or  
71 administers health, mental health, or substance abuse goods or services under a health  
72 benefit plan;
- 73 (6) Payments to or by a health care provider or health care facility or a health care  
74 provider network entity that has contracted with a health insurer, a health care purchasing  
75 group, or the medicare or Medicaid program to provide health, mental health, or  
76 substance abuse goods or services under a health benefit plan when such payments are  
77 for goods or services under the plan. However, nothing in this Code section affects  
78 whether a health care provider network entity is an insurer required to be licensed under  
79 Title 33;
- 80 (7) Insurance advertising gifts lawfully permitted under Code Section 33-6-4; or
- 81 (8) Payments by a health care provider or health care facility to a health, mental health,  
82 or substance abuse information service that provides information upon request and  
83 without charge to consumers about providers of health care goods or services to enable  
84 consumers to select appropriate providers or facilities, provided that such information  
85 service:
- 86 (A) Does not attempt through its standard questions for solicitation of consumer  
87 criteria or through any other means to steer or lead a consumer to select or consider  
88 selection of a particular health care provider or health care facility;
- 89 (B) Does not provide or represent itself as providing diagnostic or counseling services  
90 or assessments of illness or injury and does not make any promises of cure or  
91 guarantees of treatment;
- 92 (C) Does not provide or arrange for transportation of a consumer to or from the  
93 location of a health care provider or health care facility; and
- 94 (D) Charges and collects fees from a health care provider or health care facility  
95 participating in its services that are set in advance, are consistent with the fair market  
96 value for those information services, and are not based on the potential value of a  
97 patient or patients to a health care provider or health care facility or of the goods or  
98 services provided by the health care provider or health care facility.

99 (d)(1) Any person, including an officer, partner, agent, attorney, or other representative  
 100 of a firm, joint venture, partnership, business trust, syndicate, corporation, or other  
 101 business entity, who violates any provision of this Code section, when the prohibited  
 102 conduct involves less than ten patients, commits a felony and, upon conviction thereof,  
 103 shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than five years and by a fine of  
 104 \$50,000.00 per violation.

105 (2) Any person, including an officer, partner, agent, attorney, or other representative of  
 106 a firm, joint venture, partnership, business trust, syndicate, corporation, or other business  
 107 entity, who violates any provision of this Code section, when the prohibited conduct  
 108 involves ten or more patients but fewer than 20, commits a felony and, upon conviction  
 109 thereof, shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than ten years and by a fine of  
 110 not more than \$100,000.00 per violation.

111 (3) Any person, including an officer, partner, agent, attorney, or other representative of  
 112 a firm, joint venture, partnership, business trust, syndicate, corporation, or other business  
 113 entity, who violates any provision of this Code section, when the prohibited conduct  
 114 involves 20 or more patients, commits a felony and, upon conviction thereof, shall be  
 115 punished by imprisonment for 20 years and by a fine of not more than \$500,000.00 per  
 116 violation.

117 (e) Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, the Attorney General or district attorney  
 118 of the judicial circuit in which any part of the violation occurred may maintain an action  
 119 for injunctive relief or other process to enforce the provisions of this Code section.

120 (f) The party bringing an action under this Code section may recover reasonable expenses  
 121 in obtaining injunctive relief, including, but not limited to, investigative costs, court costs,  
 122 reasonable attorney's fees, witness costs, and deposition expenses.

123 (g) The provisions of this Code section are in addition to any other civil, administrative,  
 124 or criminal actions provided by law and may be imposed against both corporate and  
 125 individual defendants."

126 **SECTION 2.**

127 Said article is further amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

128 "31-1-17.

129 (a) The Governor shall appoint a director of Substance Abuse, Addiction, and Related  
 130 Disorders who shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The director shall be an  
 131 employee of the department but shall report directly to the Governor.

132 (b) The director shall have a college degree and at least one of the following qualifications:

133 (1) Educational background or work experience involving vulnerable populations  
 134 relative to substance abuse, addiction, and related disorders with the ability to assess the

135 impact of untreated mental illness and substance abuse disorders on state budgets,  
 136 hospitals, emergency rooms, jails, prisons, law enforcement agencies, educational  
 137 institutions, and related institutions and services;

138 (2) Work experience in a setting dealing with treatment and delivery of services for the  
 139 safety or well-being of children and adults affected by substance abuse, addiction, and  
 140 related disorders; or

141 (3) Experience working in or managing a complex, multidisciplinary business or  
 142 government agency.

143 (c)(1) There is established the Commission on Substance Abuse and Recovery. The  
 144 purpose of the commission is to create a coordinated and unified effort among state and  
 145 local agencies to confront the state-wide addiction and substance abuse crisis.

146 (2) The director shall oversee the commission and be a voting member thereof.

147 (3) The commission shall consist of 15 members as follows:

148 (A) The commissioner of behavioral health and developmental disabilities;

149 (B) The commissioner of public health;

150 (C) The commissioner of community health;

151 (D) The commissioner of human services;

152 (E) The State School Superintendent;

153 (F) The commissioner of public safety;

154 (G) The Commissioner of Insurance;

155 (H) The Attorney General;

156 (I) The director of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation;

157 (J) The commissioner of community supervision;

158 (K) One representative of the judicial branch representing the accountability courts to  
 159 be appointed by the Governor;

160 (L) Two representatives from the advocacy community to be appointed by the  
 161 Governor;

162 (M) One member from the House of Representative to be appointed by the Speaker of  
 163 the House of Representatives; and

164 (N) One member from the Senate to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor.

165 (4) The director shall be the chairperson of the commission. The commission may elect  
 166 such other officers and establish committees as it deems appropriate.

167 (5) Meetings of the commission shall be held quarterly, or more frequently, on the call  
 168 of the chairperson. Meetings of the commission shall be held with not less than five days'  
 169 public notice for regular meetings and with such notice as the bylaws may prescribe for  
 170 special meetings. Each member shall be given written notice of all meetings. All  
 171 meetings of the commission shall be subject to the provisions of Chapter 14 of Title 50.

172 Minutes or transcripts shall be kept of all meetings of the commission and shall include  
 173 a record of the votes of each member, specifying the yea or nay vote or the absence of  
 174 each member, on all questions and matters coming before the commission. No member  
 175 may abstain from a vote other than for reasons constituting disqualification to the  
 176 satisfaction of a majority of a quorum of the commission on a recorded vote. No member  
 177 of the commission shall be represented by a delegate or agent.

178 (6) Members shall serve without compensation, although each member of the  
 179 commission shall be reimbursed for actual expenses incurred in the performance of his  
 180 or her duties from funds available to the commission; provided, however, that any  
 181 legislative member shall receive the allowances authorized by law for legislative  
 182 members of interim legislative committees and any members who are state employees  
 183 shall be reimbursed for expenses incurred by them in the same manner as they are  
 184 reimbursed for expenses in their capacities as state employees.

185 (d) The commission shall be vested with the following functions and authority:

186 (1) To coordinate overdose data and statistics between the prescription drug monitoring  
 187 program data base, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, the Federal Bureau of  
 188 Investigation, and local governments;

189 (2) To consult on the implementation of the department's strategic plan on the opioid  
 190 crisis;

191 (3) To consult with the Attorney General's task force on the opioid crisis;

192 (4) To work with advocacy groups to coordinate public education forums with the  
 193 department and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities;

194 (5) To consult with and provide recommendations to the Governor on a potential  
 195 Medicaid waiver related to opioid abuse;

196 (6) To create a block grant program based on sliding scale needs that is strategically  
 197 based on statistics and the needs of communities. The commission shall be responsible  
 198 for accepting, reviewing, and making recommendations to the department on applicant  
 199 awards;

200 (7) To consult with the Board of Education and the Department of Education to  
 201 formulate strategies for a uniform state-wide network of education and substance abuse  
 202 and addiction prevention pursuant to subsection (c) of Code Section 20-2-142;

203 (8) To develop a prevention education plan and to increase funding for local-level  
 204 substance misuse prevention services in public schools, for law enforcement agencies,  
 205 and for community organizations; and

206 (9) To expand access to appropriate prevention, treatment, and recovery support  
 207 services."

208

**SECTION 3.**

209 Chapter 1 of Title 33 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to general  
210 provisions relative to insurance, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

211 "33-1-16.1.

212 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

213 (1) 'High-tech drug testing' means when billing for drug tests is not limited and tests are  
214 ordered for a number of different substances whereby the health benefit plan is billed  
215 separately for each substance tested.

216 (2) 'Person' means an individual, any person who provides coverage under Code  
217 Section 33-1-14, and any owner, manager, medical practitioner, employee, or any other  
218 party involved in the fraudulent act.

219 (b)(1) For purposes of this Code section, a person commits a 'fraudulent insurance act'  
220 if he or she knowingly and with intent to defraud presents, causes to be presented, or  
221 prepares with knowledge or belief that it will be presented, to or by an insurer, broker,  
222 or any agent thereof, or directly or indirectly to an insured or uninsured patient a bill for  
223 excessive, high-tech, or fraudulent drug testing in the treatment of the elderly, the  
224 disabled, or any individual affected by pain, substance abuse, addiction, or any related  
225 disorder. Such person shall include, but shall not be limited to, any person who provides  
226 coverage in this state under subsection (a) of Code Section 33-1-14.

227 (2) Such drug testing shall include, but shall not be limited to:

228 (A) Upcoding that results in billing for more expensive services or procedures than  
229 were actually provided or performed;

230 (B) Unbundling of such billing whereby drug tests from a single blood sample that  
231 detect a variety of narcotics is separated into multiple tests and billed separately;

232 (C) Billing an individual for multiple co-pay amounts;

233 (D) Billing for services that are covered by such individual's health benefit plan;

234 (E) Billing for drug testing that was not performed; or

235 (F) Billing for excessive numbers of drug tests that are found to be medically  
236 unnecessary for the treatment pursuant to this Code section.

237 (c) If, by his or her own inquiries or as a result of information received, the Commissioner  
238 has reason to believe that a person has engaged in or is engaging in a fraudulent insurance  
239 act under this Code section, the Commissioner shall have all the powers and duties  
240 pursuant to Code Section 33-1-16 to investigate such matter.

241 (d) A natural person convicted of a violation of this Code section shall be guilty of a  
242 felony and shall be punished by imprisonment for not less than ten years nor more than 20  
243 years, or by a fine of not more than \$25,000.00 per occurrence, or both.

244 (e) This Code section shall not supersede any investigation audit which involves fraud,  
245 willful misrepresentation, or abuse under Article 7 of Chapter 4 of Title 49 or any other  
246 statutory provisions which authorize investigation relating to insurance."

247

**SECTION 4.**

248 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.