

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 8 of Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to care
2 and protection of indigent and elderly patients, so as to provide for measures to improve
3 health care access for low-income senior individuals; to provide for eligibility requirements;
4 to provide for application forms; to provide for effectiveness subject to appropriation of
5 funds; to provide for related matters; to provide for legislative findings; to repeal conflicting
6 laws; and for other purposes.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

8 **SECTION 1.**

9 The General Assembly finds that:

- 10 (1) There are more than 1.6 million Medicare enrollees in Georgia;
- 11 (2) Of these, approximately 195,000 have incomes between 100 percent and 150 percent
12 of the federal poverty level and have difficulty purchasing Medicare supplemental
13 insurance to cover costs not included under their Medicare coverage;
- 14 (3) Senior individuals with limited income have difficulty closing "care gaps" to cover
15 costs not included under their Medicare coverage, such as transportation to and from
16 medical appointments;
- 17 (4) If individuals cannot access their health professionals, their health can suffer,
18 particularly in the aging population;
- 19 (5) Continuous care management can improve the health of low-income senior
20 individuals, which also reduces utilization of emergency departments and hospital
21 readmission;
- 22 (6) Common needs and social determinants of health that can directly impact an
23 individual's health are access to housing, health system navigation, transportation,
24 medication education and reconciliation, social support, and health education and
25 literacy;

26 (7) In Georgia, there are eight counties without a physician of any kind, 11 counties
 27 without a family medicine physician, 37 counties without an internal medicine physician,
 28 78 counties without a general surgery physician, 54 counties without an emergency
 29 medicine physician, and 84 counties without a psychiatrist; and
 30 (8) This lack of professionals exacerbates the ability of individuals to see physicians,
 31 making transportation needs even more important in these health professional shortage
 32 areas.

33 **SECTION 2.**

34 Chapter 8 of Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to care and
 35 protection of indigent and elderly patients, is amended by adding a new article to read as
 36 follows:

37 "ARTICLE 11

38 31-8-310.

39 (a) The Department of Community Health shall develop a program to improve health care
 40 access for low-income senior individuals. Such program shall provide financial assistance
 41 to low-income senior individuals for transportation to and from medical appointments.

42 (b) To be eligible for the program, an individual shall meet the following criteria:

- 43 (1) Be a citizen or legal resident of the United States and the State of Georgia;
- 44 (2) Be enrolled, or be eligible to be enrolled, in Medicare Part A;
- 45 (3) Not be enrolled in Medicaid;
- 46 (4) Have income between \$12,384.00 and \$18,576.00; and
- 47 (5) Not exceed any asset limits, as identified by such department.

48 (c) The Department of Community Health shall adopt an application and other necessary
 49 forms for eligible individuals to complete to receive assistance pursuant to the program.
 50 The department shall provide for individuals to submit verification forms electronically to
 51 such department and require verification no more than twice a year.

52 (d) This Code section shall be subject to appropriations by the General Assembly for such
 53 purpose."

54 **SECTION 3.**

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