



House Budget and Research Office

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FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET HOUSE BILL 916 – CONFERENCE COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

House Bill 916, the Fiscal Year 2025 budget, is set by a revised revenue estimate of \$36.1 billion, an increase of \$3.7 billion or 11.4% over the FY 2024 original budget. Highlights of HB 916 are as follows:

Economic Development

- The General Assembly provides the Department of Agriculture with \$250,000 to continue implementation of the Electric Vehicle Charging Pilot program.
- The FY 2025 budget provides \$267,861 for two shellfish inspection and certification program positions to continue to promote food safety.
- The General Assembly supports the governor's recommendation to provide \$150,000 for the Feral Hog Task Force.
- In the Department of Community Affairs, the General Assembly includes \$1 million to create the accountable housing initiative. The initiative, under the State Housing Trust Fund, provides funds for organizations who help homeless individuals obtain stable, immediate housing in the short-term and achieve affordable housing in the long-term.
- The General Assembly supports the governor's recommendation to provide \$3.7 million for the State Housing Trust Fund to improve homelessness services through new federal grant opportunities and \$6 million in existing funds for the Rural Workforce Housing Initiative. The program provides funding for projects that address current workforce housing needs by the expansion or improvement of the housing stock.
- House Bill 916 provides \$1.7 million to the State Forestry Commission for grants to counties with more than 20,000 acres of state-owned land pursuant to O.C.G.A. 48-14-1.

Education

- The FY 2025 budget fully funds the Quality Basic Education (QBE) program in the Department of Education, totaling \$14.1 billion in state funds; a record amount of state funds provided to K-12 education. The QBE funding formula has been fully funded the last six out of seven years.
- HB 916 provides \$373.6 million to increase the state base salary schedule for certified teachers and employees by \$2,500, for a total adjustment to the state base salary schedule of \$9,500 since FY 2020. This adjustment can be found in the following programs with certified employees and certified staff: Agricultural Education (\$513,154), Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS) (\$1.6 million), Sparsity Grants (\$461,897), Residential Treatment Facilities (\$296,944),

Preschool Disabilities Services (\$1.5 million), Quality Basic Education Program (\$367.8 million), and Technology/Career Education (\$1.4 million).

- The budget also includes \$7.8 million for a 4.1% pay raise for school nutrition workers (\$1.4 million), bus drivers (\$5 million), school nurses (\$1.5 million), and Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) staff (\$396,624). The budget also includes \$8.5 million for a \$1,000 salary supplement for school custodians.
- The final version of the FY 2025 budget includes \$243.5 million to provide for enrollment growth and training and experience for an additional 825 students and 3,311 teachers. The budget also includes \$40.2 million for growth in the State Commission Charter School supplements. Charter system grants receive \$301,659 in additional funding and state completion schools (previously alternative education state charter high schools) receive \$6.3 million, pursuant to HB 87 (2023 Session).
- House Bill 916 provides \$266.8 million in new funds for Equalization grants, a grant to systems whose property tax wealth per weighted FTE falls below the statewide average. In FY 2025, Equalization grants are funded at a total of \$1 billion.
- The Conference Committee version of HB 916 includes \$109 million for school safety, in a new program under the Department of Education called School Security Grants. The program provides a \$45,000 grant per school to be used for school safety and security. The funds can be used for infrastructure expenses or operating expenses, to include salaries for school resource officers (SROs). The FY 2025 budget also includes \$362,000 in one-time funds for student health and safety, including funds for automated external defibrillators (AEDs) pursuant to HB 874 (2024 Session) and grants to school systems for CPR training.
- The budget includes \$200 million in additional funding for pupil transportation based on updated buses and mileage. The increase also includes additional funds for operations to reflect the increased cost of fuel, oil, and other operating expenses. The total pupil transportation funding is \$353.5 million in FY 2025.
- The school nutrition program receives an additional \$6.3 million in state funds to provide for the cost of breakfast and lunch for reduced-paying students. During the pandemic, the federal government provided reimbursement for all students, regardless of free and reduced status. Additionally, \$2 million in school nutrition formula funds is provided to local school systems to keep the price of meals affordable for paying students and families.
- In the Agricultural Education program, \$192,000 is provided for two new young farmer positions in Barrow and Peach counties. Additionally, HB 916 provides \$88,000 for eight extended day/year programs. In the Technology/Career Education program, the FY 2025 budget includes \$1 million for construction industry certification to improve career path placements, teacher recruitment and retention, and program alignment with elementary and middle schools, as well as \$3 million for three heavy equipment simulators at ten schools.
- The budget includes an additional \$177,000 for life sciences industry certification in the Curriculum program for a total budget of \$500,000. The funds will support current teachers in urban areas through additional professional development, expanded access to lab equipment, and new teacher life science professional development.
- The final version of the budget provides \$1.5 million for dyslexia screening pursuant to SB 48 (2019 Session) and universal screening pursuant to HB 538 (2023 Session), recognizing available universal screeners can also screen for dyslexia.

- HB 916 includes \$6.1 million for literacy to include: regional literacy coaches at each RESA, \$1,000 supplements to school literacy leads upon the completion of an accredited training model, and training for local coaches, teachers, and supplemental training for ESOL teachers, prioritizing training to schools identified by the RESA as needing additional literacy intervention.
- The budget includes \$319,000 for one STEM International Baccalaureate (IB) exam to all students and one IB exam for free and reduced-paying lunch students. This mirrors state funding currently provided for Advanced Placement (AP) exams.
- The FY 2025 budget includes \$250,000 for a mentorship program for new teachers to increase retention rates.
- Communities in Schools receives an additional \$1 million, recognizing additional county participation and a per affiliate increase. Communities in Schools supports students academically and non-academically to improve student attendance, behavior, academic performance, retention, and graduation.
- House Bill 916 provides \$9.3 million to increase Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) reimbursement rates for childcare providers in the Department of Early Care and Learning. Current reimbursement rates are at the 25th percentile, and this infusion, along with federal funds, will bring the reimbursement rates above the 50th percentile, in accordance with federal regulations.
- The FY 2025 budget includes over \$57.5 million in new lottery funds for the Department of Early Care and Learning to implement the recommendations provided by the House Early Childhood Education Working Group. These recommendations include: a class size reduction from 22 to 20 students, phased-in over four years; an increase in start-up grants for new classrooms; funds for classroom replenishment grants every five years; an increase in transportation funding; an operating increase for private Pre-K providers; and funds to improve Pre-K lead teacher and assistant teacher pay by bringing pay parity between Pre-K assistant teachers and K-12 paraprofessionals and moving Pre-K lead teachers to the State Board of Education salary schedule.
- The Conference Committee version of the budget includes \$8.97 million in lottery funds to continue the Summer Transition Program at its current level of service for rising Pre-Kindergarten and rising Kindergarten students throughout Georgia. The program was expanded after COVID with the use of limited federal funds. With the cessation of those additional federal funds, this increase in funding will allow the program to continue at its current level without the need to close any classrooms.
- HB 916 recognizes \$26.75 million in the base budget of the Employees' Retirement System for a one-time benefit adjustment of about \$500 for each retired state employee. This annual benefit adjustment is in addition to any cost-of-living adjustment granted by the Board of Trustees.
- The Conference Committee version of the FY 2025 budget includes \$5.6 million in the Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS) for an increase in the benefit multiplier from \$16.50 to \$17.00 pursuant to SB 105 (2024 Session).

General Government

- In addition to targeted salary adjustments to recruit and retain critical positions in specified agencies, HB 916 provides \$260 million across all agencies to provide a 4% cost-of-living-adjustment for state employees, not to exceed \$3,000.
- The Fiscal Year 2025 budget enables the State Accounting Office to collect and transfer \$247,055 for two positions that will help monitor agency data to ensure timely and accurate reporting.

- The General Assembly agreed to include over \$14 million to the Department of Administrative Services to account for rising liability insurance premiums (\$13.3 million) and to provide first responders diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with a supplemental benefit (\$1 million).
- HB 916 provides the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) with \$15 million and instructs the agency to utilize an additional \$9 million, for a total of \$24 million, to both enhance and standardize cybersecurity services provided to executive branch agencies. The funds will support a security operations center, help GTA standardize and improve state policies related to cybersecurity, and allow the authority to bring in consultants to prepare an audit of executive branch agencies.
- In the FY 2025 budget, the General Assembly supports providing over \$300,000 to the Department of Banking and Finance for a \$2,000 targeted salary enhancement for examiners in the Financial Institution Supervision division and for two additional examiner positions that will focus non-depository institution licensing to help bring the state closer to statutory compliance.
- The Department of Driver Services receives nearly \$2 million in the FY 2025 budget for cloud server migration and maintenance, which is a continuation of the \$7.8 million provided in the Amended FY 2024 budget. The agency also receives \$166,925 to account for an increase in the fees to utilize the federal Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements system and \$341,057 to address increased postage rate expenses.
- HB 916 approves the transfer of excess revenue in the Insurance Regulation Division of the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance to the Fire Safety Program for nine inspectors, three vehicles, and related expenses. The inspectors will work on inspection backlogs related to construction, manufactured housing, and elevators.
- The General Assembly supports the governor's recommendation in the FY 2025 budget to direct the Department of Labor to utilize \$2 million in existing funds and transfer an additional \$409,475 from the Technical College System of Georgia to address the appeals hearing case backlog and improve customer service under the Unemployment Insurance program.
- The FY 2025 budget provides the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) with over \$1.4 million for five positions to work with the agricultural water withdrawal permitting program under the Environmental Protection Division and six new game warden positions within DNR's Law Enforcement Division. The agency will also receive \$458,000 for pay adjustments for part-time staff with the Parks, Recreation, and Historic Sites Division, a continuation of funding provided to part-time staff in the Amended FY 2024 budget; \$300,000 to start a deer food bank, which will process venison donations; and \$4 million for Tybee Island beach restoration.
- HB 916 recognizes over \$10.5 million for the Georgia Building Authority to address expenses related to additional Capitol Police security and operations.
- The Department of Revenue receives over \$3.3 million in the FY 2025 budget to renew a contract with the Georgia Correctional Industries for vehicle tag production. The budget also includes an increase of \$411,554 for tax examiner positions to work with newly delinquent taxpayers and recognizes rental savings of over \$1.6 million due to a consolidation of leased office space, in part due to an investment made by the General Assembly in the Amended FY 2024 budget to move from physical servers to cloud-based servers.
- The General Assembly recommends providing the Secretary of State's Office with over \$1.5 million for a comprehensive overhaul of the Professional Licensing Boards Division to include an additional

17 employees, temporary staff to address the current backlog of license applications and appeals, and related equipment and operating expenses. Additionally, the agency will receive \$405,434 for four criminal investigators to address an increase in the volume of complaints received by the Elections and Professional Licensing Boards Divisions and \$146,212 to support investigative operations under the State Elections Board. The budget also provides \$5 million for third-party ballot-text auditing technology to allow the Secretary of State's Office to audit and verify the validity of any election in the state without the use of QR codes.

Health

- The FY 2025 budget includes \$750,000 in the Department of Community Health for start-up grants for three federally qualified health centers (FQHCs). These grants support primary care in Union County, a behavioral health expansion in south Cobb County, and mobile dental care in southwest Georgia.
- The FY 2025 budget includes \$292,000 to support new and existing housing and wellness programs for medical students with the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC).
- \$382,965 is included in the FY 2025 budget for 168 employees in the healthcare facility regulation field to receive an additional \$2,000 salary enhancement. These employees include nurse managers, compliance specialists, quality assurance specialists, and regulatory compliance managers.
- House Bill 916 also provides \$141 million for skilled nursing centers to reflect 2022 cost reports.
- The General Assembly supports the governor's recommendation of \$39 million in provider rate increases for the Independent Care Waiver Program and the Elderly and Disabled Waiver Program. Additionally, HB 916 provides \$15.9 million for provider rate increases within the Georgia Pediatric Program (GAPP).
- HB 916 includes funding increases for multiple provider types serving Medicaid patients. These include \$5.6 million for speech therapists, audiologists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists; \$12.6 million for primary care physicians and obstetricians; \$392,173 for optometrists; and \$648,829 for independent low-volume pharmacists. Additionally, House Bill 916 includes funding for new services to be available to this population to include \$10.5 million for dental services; \$603,883 for acute kidney injuries to be treated in a dialysis setting; \$5.6 million for continuous glucose monitors; and \$1.1 million to implement a sickle cell managed care pilot program.
- \$283,995 is included in the FY 2025 budget for the evaluation and implementation of a biomarker test to provide enhanced surveillance for inpatient pregnant patients with hypertensive disorder of pregnancy.
- HB 916 includes \$2 million for 105 new residency slots in graduate medical education. The budget also includes \$56,757 for a rural public health preventative medicine rotation; \$50,000 for the development of a Pediatric Rural Training Track; \$150,000 for year two of the maternal fetal medicine fellowship; and \$750,000 for an OB/GYN service expansion as part of a new rural training track residency program.
- The General Assembly supports the governor's recommendation of \$850,055 for the fifth year of the seven-year expansion plan for Mercer School of Medicine's medical school campus in Columbus. Additionally, HB 916 includes \$75,000 in funding for the Valdosta Campus, \$1.2 million to increase Mercer's Accelerated Track class size, and \$500,000 in matching funds for scholarships for students committed to practicing primary care in rural Georgia.

- HB 916 provides \$500,000 for infant mortality research as part of Morehouse School of Medicine's Center for Maternal Health Equity.
- \$900,000 is included in HB 916 for additional loan repayment for dentists in rural areas.
- House Bill 916 includes \$728,109 for eight positions for the Georgia Composite Medical Board.
- Within the Department of Public Health, the General Assembly funds \$908,522 to expand the visiting hematologist program to improve health outcomes of those with Sickle Cell Disease and \$796,000 for outreach and breast cancer screening services.
- HB 916 increases funding by \$765,528 for the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program and \$130,000 for the Georgia Poison Center.
- The General Assembly further supports the governor's recommendation of \$1 million to expand the pilot program to provide home visiting in at-risk and underserved rural communities by increasing the funding by \$752,000. The increased funding will allow the program to expand to an additional 10 counties.
- House Bill 916 provides \$978,639 to include two additional disorders for newborn screenings that have been approved by the Georgia Newborn Screening Advisory Committee.
- \$150,611 is included in the FY 2025 budget for one congenital syphilis and HIV case manager position to link cases identified during pregnancy and delivery to testing and treatment resources.
- HB 916 includes \$4 million as part of a multi-year plan to stabilize the Georgia Trauma Network.

Higher Education

- House Bill 916 includes \$2.9 million for the University System of Georgia (USG), reflecting a 0.8% decrease in enrollment, with an increase in higher cost program areas, and a 0.2% increase in square footage. The formula also includes \$91.8 million for a \$4,000 cost-of-living adjustment, not to exceed \$3,000, for all full-time benefit eligible employees, effective July 1, 2024.
- The FY 2025 budget includes \$66 million in the Teaching program to restore formula earnings reduced in FY 2024. The reduction disproportionately impacted smaller, access institutions in the state. Also included in the Teaching program is \$4.6 million for the Medical College of Georgia expansion at Georgia Southern University's Armstrong campus.
- The Public Service/Special Funding Initiatives program includes \$1.6 million for Middle Georgia State University to continue the aviation career path program. The Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) receives \$500,000 in additional dollars to support operations and address a backlog of projects. The Public Services/Special Funding Initiatives program also includes funds for legal clinics to increase law student exposure and involvement in public defender and prosecuting attorney work.
- House Bill 916 includes \$1.5 million for the David Ralston Center for Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities at the University of Georgia. This center will address workforce needs and gaps in regard to the professionals who serve Georgians with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- The final version of the FY 2025 budget provides the Georgia Public Library Service with \$141,350 in enhanced funding due to an increase in state population.
- The FY 2025 budget provides an additional \$1.6 million for the Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) Grant at the Georgia Student Finance Commission. The IPSE program is a college program for

students with intellectual and developmental disabilities that allows them to earn a certificate while receiving support services. The total appropriation of \$2.6 million will cover the tuition and fees for 176 total students at institutions throughout the state.

- House Bill 916 provides an additional \$15 million for the Dual Enrollment program which served over 52,000 Georgia students in FY 2023 and is continuing to grow. These additional funds bring the FY 2025 total appropriation to \$91.3 million.
- The FY 2025 budget directs the Georgia Student Finance Commission to utilize existing funds to increase the Tuition Equalization Grant (TEG) award amount from \$1,000 per year to \$1,100 per year.
- House Bill 916 provides \$4.75 million to fund operations within the Quick Start program at the Technical College System of Georgia. These additional funds will allow Quick Start to have the staff and facilities needed to meet training obligations throughout the state.
- House Bill 916 provides \$1.9 million to the Technical College System of Georgia to fund 22 additional campus officers to serve at campus police departments throughout the system.
- The Conference Committee version of the FY 2025 budget provides \$7.4 million in targeted funds to provide increased credit hour earnings for the high-demand program areas of aviation, commercial truck driving, and nursing to reflect the high-cost nature of providing these highly-needed programs.

Human Resources

- The FY 2025 budget includes \$3.2 million in the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) for the Macon Crisis Stabilization Diagnostic Center, which will serve as the state's first crisis support center for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- The Georgia General Assembly supports the governor's recommendation of \$79.9 million to fund the NOW/COMP provider rate increase and \$26.7 million for the behavioral health provider rate increase.
- HB 916 includes \$2.5 million to expand jail-based competency restoration programs.
- DBHDD receives \$500,000 to support Georgians experiencing homelessness by funding behavioral health services and rapid rehousing. The Department of Veterans Services is also appropriated \$121,250 for a coordinator to work with veterans experiencing homelessness.
- \$608,000 is provided to DBHDD to support children and adults with autism through enrichment and employment opportunities, psychiatric services, and screening.
- The Georgia Apex program is supported with \$1 million to expand to additional schools. The program provides several services utilizing mental health professionals, including community education, at home visits, virtual visits, group counseling, and individual counseling.
- The Sexual Offender Risk Review Board is appropriated \$2.5 million to increase personnel to address the current case backlog.
- The Department of Human Services (DHS) receives \$7 million to provide a \$3,000 salary enhancement for child support, child welfare, and elder abuse caseworkers.
- HB 916 supports children who come in contact with the child welfare system with \$1 million to the court appointed special advocates (CASA) to expand statewide capacity and \$1 million to the state's Child Advocacy Centers for increased forensic and mental health services.
- The Georgia General Assembly funds an additional 275 non-Medicaid home and community-based services slots to help keep older adults in their homes longer with supportive services.

- DHS is appropriated \$8.4 million for a 3% provider increase for child caring institutions, child placing agencies, foster parents, and relative caregivers.
- Georgia Family Connection receives \$596,250 in the Conference Committee version of the budget to increase county allocations from \$52,500 to \$56,250.
- The Georgia Veterans Service is appropriated \$1 million to support active-duty military members and veterans with behavioral health services.

Public Safety and the Courts

- The FY 2025 budget includes \$1.5 million to bolster Georgia's ability to attract and retain staff attorneys in the Attorney General's Office. These adjustments will bring starting salaries for attorneys to \$70,000.
- The FY 2025 budget includes \$1.1 million to fund three new judgeships created in the Douglas, Houston, and Tifton judicial circuits, and \$1.1 million to annualize the new judgeships in the Atlantic, Coweta, and Dougherty judicial circuits created in the FY 2024 budget. The General Assembly appropriates \$108,440 in new funds and transfers existing funds from the Coweta Judicial Circuit for the creation of the West Georgia Judicial Circuit for Carroll and Heard counties.
- The FY 2025 budget provides \$45.9 million for an additional \$3,000 increase for law enforcement officers across 19 state agencies.
- House Bill 916 also provides \$71.9 million to Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) for physical and pharmaceutical services to continue to provide these necessary services to inmates.
- House Bill 916 includes \$10.7 million in new funding for the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) to make needed upgrades to its infrastructure for security technology to detect and prevent the introduction of contraband. This appropriation provides necessary technology and security enhancements to keep both inmates and correctional staff safe in existing facilities. The budget also includes \$60 million for facility maintenance and repairs statewide.
- The FY 2025 budget appropriates \$10 million to GDC to bring 400 transitional center beds online at the Metro Re-entry Center. These transitional center beds will give inmates returning to the metro area after release access to numerous resources and programming including employment assistance, social services connections, housing assistance, and family reunification programming.
- House Bill 916 provides \$3.5 million to fund a \$2 per diem increase for county correctional institutions. County correctional institutions are a vital part of Georgia's correctional framework. There are 21 county correctional institutions across Georgia housing an average of 4,526 inmates in FY 2023.
- The General Assembly provides \$12.7 million to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) for 48 domestic violence shelters and \$2 million for 28 sexual assault centers to pay for administrative personnel and facility costs related to compliance with state standards. Another \$4.3 million is appropriated to CJCC for a dedicated sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) coordinator in 27 sexual assault centers and 21 satellite locations equipped to perform forensic medical exams. This funding will ensure the integrity of critical forensic medical examinations needed for the prosecution of sexual assault. SANE coordinators are trained in trauma response to handle victims with care and integrity while gathering evidence.
- The FY 2025 budget provides \$2.7 million in new state funds for the Georgia Crime Victims Emergency Fund for personal services and operating expenses associated with the fund, which is

used to provide up to \$25,000 in compensation for expenses, loss of income, or support to victims of violent crime. In FY 2023, the Crime Victims Emergency Fund paid for 3,956 forensic medical exams, 9,900 forensic interviews of children and disabled persons, and processed over 20,000 claims for compensation.

- The Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) receives \$2.5 million in the FY 2025 budget for targeted salary increases for specialized positions including scientists, lab technicians, evidence receiving technicians, digital forensic investigators, financial forensic auditors, and criminal intelligence analysts. GBI's crime lab will receive \$1.7 million to annualize 14 scientists, two crime lab assistant managers, two crime lab technicians, two evidence receiving technicians, and one IT business analyst to address the crime lab backlog of more than 38,000 pieces of evidence to process. These positions and their related operating expenses will specifically target the three disciplines with the highest backlog: chemistry, firearms, and toxicology.
- The FY 2025 budget includes \$4.8 million to establish a new GBI Gang Task Force to combat crime in Columbus. The unit will partner with local law enforcement to target gang violence in the area. An additional \$680,971 is funded for operational needs of the GBI to combat crime and gang activity.

Transportation

- House Bill 916 reflects \$2.4 billion in funding for Georgia's transportation infrastructure.
- The FY 2025 budget includes an increase of \$43.6 million to the Georgia Department of Transportation's capital programs and an additional \$35.8 million in the Routine Maintenance Program.
- The budget includes an increase of \$407,000 to the Traffic Management and Control Program to support the recruitment of Highway Emergency Response Operators (HEROs).
- HB 916 provides a \$2.4 million increase for the Georgia Infrastructure Bank (GTIB).