

The House Committee on Human Relations and Aging offers the following substitute to HB 635:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 5 of Title 30 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the  
2 "Disabled Adults and Elder Persons Protection Act," so as to provide for the establishment  
3 of Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Multidisciplinary Teams to coordinate the  
4 investigation of and responses to suspected instances of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of  
5 disabled adults or elder persons; to provide for a definition; to provide for immunity; to  
6 provide for coordination with the director of the Division of Aging Services; to provide for  
7 the composition, duties, and responsibilities of such Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation  
8 Multidisciplinary Teams; to provide for memoranda of understanding; to provide for  
9 confidentiality of records; to amend Chapter 3 of Title 35 of the Official Code of Georgia  
10 Annotated, relating to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, so as to authorize issuing of a  
11 subpoena; to provide for order compelling compliance; to provide for penalty; to provide for  
12 related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

13 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

14 **SECTION 1.**

15 Chapter 5 of Title 30 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the "Disabled  
16 Adults and Elder Persons Protection Act," is amended in Code Section 30-5-3, relating to  
17 definitions, by adding a new paragraph to read as follows:

18 "(1.1) 'Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team' means the  
19 multiagency team established in each judicial circuit in this state pursuant to Code  
20 Section 30-5-11."

21 **SECTION 2.**

22 Said chapter is further amended by revising subsections (b) and (c) of Code Section 30-5-4,  
23 relating to reporting of need for protective services, manner and contents of report, immunity  
24 from civil or criminal liability, and privileged communications, as follows:

25       "(b)(1)(A) A report that a disabled adult or elder person is in need of protective services  
 26       or has been the victim of abuse, neglect, or exploitation shall be made to an adult  
 27       protection agency providing protective services as designated by the department and  
 28       to an appropriate law enforcement agency or prosecuting attorney. If a report of a  
 29       disabled adult or elder person abuse, neglect, or exploitation is made to an adult  
 30       protection agency or independently discovered by the agency, then the agency shall  
 31       immediately make a reasonable determination based on available information as to  
 32       whether the incident alleges actions by an individual, other than the disabled adult or  
 33       elder person, that constitute a crime and include such information in their report. If a  
 34       crime is suspected, the report shall immediately be forwarded to the appropriate law  
 35       enforcement agency or prosecuting attorney. During an adult ~~protective protection~~  
 36       agency's investigation, it shall be under a continuing obligation to immediately report  
 37       the discovery of any evidence that may constitute a crime.

38       (B) If the disabled adult or person is 65 years of age or older and is a resident, a report  
 39       shall be made in accordance with Article 4 of Chapter 8 of Title 31. If a report made  
 40       in accordance with the provisions of this Code section alleges that the abuse or  
 41       exploitation occurred within a long-term care facility, such report shall be investigated  
 42       in accordance with Articles 3 and 4 of Chapter 8 of Title 31.

43       (2) Reporting required by subparagraph ~~(A)(1)~~ (A) of paragraph (1) of this subsection  
 44       may be made by oral or written communication. Such report shall include the name and  
 45       address of the disabled adult or elder person and should include the name and address of  
 46       the disabled adult's or elder person's caretaker, the age of the disabled adult or elder  
 47       person, the nature and extent of the disabled adult's or elder person's injury or condition  
 48       resulting from abuse, exploitation, or neglect, and other pertinent information.

49       (3) When a report of a disabled adult's or elder person's abuse, neglect, or exploitation  
 50       is originally reported to a law enforcement agency, it shall be forwarded by such agency  
 51       to the director or his or her designee within 24 hours of receipt.

52       (c) Anyone who makes a report pursuant to this chapter, who testifies in any judicial  
 53       proceeding arising from the report, who provides protective services, ~~or~~ who participates  
 54       in a required investigation, or who participates on an Adult Abuse, Neglect, and  
 55       Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team under the provisions of this chapter shall be immune  
 56       from any civil liability or criminal prosecution on account of such report or testimony or  
 57       participation, unless such person acted in bad faith, with a malicious purpose, or was a  
 58       party to such crime or fraud. Any financial institution or investment company, including  
 59       without limitation officers and directors thereof, that is an employer of anyone who makes  
 60       a report pursuant to this chapter in his or her capacity as an employee, or who testifies in  
 61       any judicial proceeding arising from a report made in his or her capacity as an employee,

62 or who participates in a required investigation under the provisions of this chapter in his  
 63 or her capacity as an employee, shall be immune from any civil liability or criminal  
 64 prosecution on account of such report or testimony or participation of its employee, unless  
 65 such financial institution or investment company knew or should have known that the  
 66 employee acted in bad faith or with a malicious purpose and failed to take reasonable and  
 67 available measures to prevent such employee from acting in bad faith or with a malicious  
 68 purpose. The immunity described in this subsection shall apply not only with respect to  
 69 the acts of making a report, testifying in a judicial proceeding arising from a report,  
 70 providing protective services, or participating in a required investigation but also shall  
 71 apply with respect to the content of the information communicated in such acts."

### 72 SECTION 3.

73 Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 30-5-7, relating to confidentiality  
 74 of public records, as follows:

75 "30-5-7.

76 (a) All records pertaining to the abuse, neglect, or exploitation of disabled adults or elder  
 77 persons in the custody of the department or an Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation  
 78 Multidisciplinary Team shall be confidential; and access thereto by persons other than the  
 79 department, the director, or the district attorney shall only be by valid subpoena or order  
 80 of any court of competent jurisdiction. ~~Nothing in this Code section shall be construed to~~  
 81 ~~deny agencies participating in joint investigations at the request of and with the department,~~  
 82 ~~or conducting separate investigations of abuse, neglect, or exploitation within an agency's~~  
 83 ~~scope of authority, or law enforcement personnel who are conducting an investigation into~~  
 84 ~~any criminal offense in which a disabled adult or elder person is a victim from having~~  
 85 ~~access to such records.~~

86 (b) The following persons or agencies shall have reasonable access to such records  
 87 concerning reports of elder, disabled adult, or resident abuse:

88 (1) A prosecuting attorney in this state or any other state or political subdivision thereof,  
 89 or the United States, who may seek such access in connection with official duty;

90 (2) Police or any other law enforcement agency or personnel of this state or any other  
 91 state who are conducting an investigation into any criminal offense involving a report of  
 92 known or suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of disabled adults or elder persons;

93 (3) Agencies participating in joint investigations at the request of and with the  
 94 department, or conducting separate investigations of abuse, neglect, or exploitation within  
 95 an agency's scope of authority, unless such records are wholly owned by the federal  
 96 government; and

97 (4) Any Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team as defined in  
 98 Code Section 30-5-3.

99 (c) Any individual who made a report according to Code Section 30-5-4 can make a  
 100 request to the department to know if the report or reports made by that individual have been  
 101 received, whether an investigation was opened or not, and whether the investigation is still  
 102 open or has been closed, and the department will respond in writing within five business  
 103 days with this information, but no other case information will be released.

104 (d) Any time that the record is released pursuant to this Code section, other than to law  
 105 enforcement or to the district attorney or pursuant to a court order for unredacted records,  
 106 the name and identifying information of the individual who made the report shall be  
 107 redacted.

108 (e) Records or portions of records of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of disabled adults or  
 109 elder persons in the custody of the department may be released to members of an Adult  
 110 Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team established pursuant to Code  
 111 Section 30-5-11 for reasonable use in furtherance of the purposes authorized in this Code  
 112 section."

113 **SECTION 4.**

114 Said chapter is further amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

115 "30-5-11.

116 (a) The district attorney of each judicial circuit shall establish, or cause to be established,  
 117 an Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team for the purposes of:

118 (1) Coordinating the investigation of suspected instances of abuse, neglect, or  
 119 exploitation of a disabled adult or elder person pursuant to Chapter 5 of Title 16 or Code  
 120 Section 30-5-5, 31-7-12.1, or 31-8-83;

121 (2) Coordinating responses to suspected instances of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of  
 122 a disabled adult or elder person, including protective services; and

123 (3) Identifying opportunities within local jurisdictions to improve policies and  
 124 procedures in the notification of and response to abuse, neglect, and exploitation given  
 125 local resources.

126 (b) As determined by the district attorney or his or her designee, the Adult Abuse, Neglect,  
 127 and Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team shall consist of representatives, from within the  
 128 appropriate judicial circuit, representing these suggested categories:

129 (1) The district attorney or his or her designee;

130 (2) Local law enforcement agencies;

131 (3) The Georgia Bureau of Investigation;

132 (4) Adult Protective Services of the department's Division of Aging Services;

- 133 (5) The state funded licensure activities of the Healthcare Facility Regulation Division  
 134 of the Department of Community Health;
- 135 (6) The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities;
- 136 (7) The medical examiner or coroner of that county in which the team exists;
- 137 (8) Nonprofit organizations that provide victim services or adult care services;
- 138 (9) Local, regional, and state task forces or coordinating entities regarding at-risk adults;
- 139 (10) Providers of medical, legal, or housing services or housing facilities to disabled  
 140 adults or elder persons who are victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation; and
- 141 (11) Any other entity which the district attorney or his or her designee determines is  
 142 necessary for the successful operation of the Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation  
 143 Multidisciplinary Team.
- 144 (c) Each Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team shall:
- 145 (1) Meet regularly, as determined by the district attorney or his or her designee;  
 146 provided, however, that meetings shall be held at least semiannually; and
- 147 (2) Coordinate with the director on investigations of instances of unlicensed personal  
 148 care homes, or of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of disabled adults or elder  
 149 persons that are based on reports made pursuant to Chapter 5 of Title 16 or Code  
 150 Section 30-5-4, 31-7-12.1, 31-8-82, or 31-8-83 or reports made or concerns raised by  
 151 members of the agencies, organizations, or entities represented on the Adult Abuse,  
 152 Neglect, and Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team.
- 153 (d) The district attorney or his or her designee shall coordinate the creation of a  
 154 memorandum of understanding that describes the Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation  
 155 Multidisciplinary Team's procedures and methods of operation in detail, including  
 156 confidentiality requirements and the sharing of information among such team's members  
 157 in accordance with subsection (e) of this Code section. The memorandum shall be signed  
 158 by a representative of each agency, organization, or entity participating in such team.
- 159 (e)(1) All records and information acquired by an Adult Abuse, Neglect, and  
 160 Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team pertaining to the abuse, neglect, or exploitation of  
 161 disabled adults or elder persons shall be confidential pursuant to Code Sections 30-5-7,  
 162 31-8-86, and 37-3-166; furthermore, notwithstanding any other provisions of law,  
 163 information acquired by and documents, records, and reports of the team shall be  
 164 confidential and shall not be subject to Article 4 of Chapter 18 of Title 50, relating to  
 165 open records.
- 166 (2) All records pertaining to the abuse, neglect, or exploitation of disabled adults or elder  
 167 persons in the custody of the departments included in the Adult Abuse, Neglect, and  
 168 Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team shall be available to the members of an Adult  
 169 Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team for the purpose of investigating

170 or responding to a report of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a disabled adult, elder  
171 person, or resident.

172 (3) It shall be unlawful for any member of an Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation  
173 Multidisciplinary Team to knowingly disclose, receive, make use of, or authorize, or  
174 knowingly permit, participate in, or acquiesce to the use of, any information received or  
175 generated in the course of the Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Multidisciplinary  
176 Team's investigations, responses, or activities to any third party; provided, however, that  
177 disclosure may be made to persons and entities directly involved in the administration of  
178 this Code section, including:

179 (A) Persons providing protective services necessary for the disabled adult or elder  
180 person;

181 (B) Representatives of law enforcement;

182 (C) Grand juries or courts in the exercise of official business;

183 (D) Members of such Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Multidisciplinary Teams;  
184 and

185 (E) Persons engaged in bona fide research or audit purposes; provided, however, that  
186 only information in the aggregate without identifying information shall be provided for  
187 research or audit purposes and confidentiality of the data shall be maintained.

188 (4) Unless expressly provided otherwise in the memorandum of understanding, members  
189 of an Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team may share  
190 information received or generated in the course of such team's investigations, responses,  
191 or activities only among members of such team.

192 (5) To promote efficiency and effectiveness in its mission, an Adult Abuse, Neglect, and  
193 Exploitation Multidisciplinary Team may maintain a data base of information about such  
194 team's past and ongoing cases, provided that identifying information about individual  
195 victims and clients shall not be accessed by any person outside of such team other than  
196 those persons serving as care coordinators or victim advocates or who represent  
197 organizations providing such services.

198 (f)(1) By March 1 of each calendar year, the Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation  
199 Multidisciplinary Teams shall submit a report to the director of the Georgia Bureau of  
200 Investigation regarding the prevalence and circumstances of abuse, neglect, or  
201 exploitation of disabled adults or elder persons in this state; shall recommend measures  
202 to reduce such crimes; and shall address in the report the following issues:

203 (A) How many investigations or cases the Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation  
204 Multidisciplinary Team has received for the calendar year;

205 (B) How many reviews of investigations or cases recommended criminal prosecution;  
206 and

207 (C) Whether policy, procedural, regulatory, or statutory changes are called for as a  
 208 result of these findings.

209 (2) The Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Multidisciplinary Teams shall also  
 210 establish procedures for the conduct of reviews by local review committees into abuse,  
 211 neglect, or exploitation of disabled adults or elder persons and may obtain the assistance  
 212 from at-risk adult protection professionals in establishing such procedures."

213 **SECTION 5.**

214 Chapter 3 of Title 35 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the Georgia  
 215 Bureau of Investigation, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

216 "35-3-4.4.

217 (a) In any investigation of a violation of Article 8 of Chapter 5 of Title 16 or other criminal  
 218 violation involving the abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a disabled adult, elder person, or  
 219 resident, the director, assistant director, or deputy director for investigations shall be  
 220 authorized to issue a subpoena, with the consent of the Attorney General, to compel the  
 221 production of books, papers, documents, or other tangible things, including records and  
 222 documents contained within, or generated by, a computer or any other electronic device,  
 223 unless such records are wholly owned by the federal government.

224 (b) Upon the failure of a person without lawful excuse to obey a subpoena, the director,  
 225 assistant director, or deputy director for investigations, through the prosecuting attorney,  
 226 may apply to a superior court having jurisdiction for an order compelling compliance.  
 227 Such person may object to the subpoena on the grounds that it fails to comply with this  
 228 Code section or upon any constitutional or other legal right or privilege of such person.  
 229 The court may issue an order modifying or setting aside such subpoena or directing  
 230 compliance with the original subpoena. Failure to obey a subpoena issued under this Code  
 231 section may be punished by the court as contempt of court."

232 **SECTION 6.**

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