

House Bill 19

By: Representatives Scott of the 76th, Schofield of the 63rd, and Davis of the 87th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 1 of Chapter 3 of Title 37 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
2 relating to general provisions related to examination and treatment for mental illness, so as
3 to require the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to create,
4 operate, and maintain an electronic registry for inpatient psychiatric beds; to provide for
5 definitions; to provide for contracting with a third party; to require psychiatric facilities and
6 other providers to submit certain information to the department; to provide for accessibility
7 to the registry to end users; to provide for an advisory committee; to provide for quarterly
8 reporting to certain legislative committees; to authorize the department to establish a policy
9 for secondary use of registry data; to require the department to provide for registry data to
10 the contractor or entity that operates the Georgia Crisis and Access Line; to provide a short
11 title; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

12 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

13 **SECTION 1.**

14 This Act shall be known and may be cited as the "Mental Health Availability and Access
15 Act."

SECTION 2.

Article 1 of Chapter 3 of Title 37 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to general provisions related to examination and treatment for mental illness, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

"37-3-9.

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

(1) 'Advisory committee' means the committee established pursuant to subsection (e) of this Code section.

(2) 'Psychiatric facility' shall have the same meaning as 'facility' as defined in paragraph (7) of Code Section 37-3-1.

(3) 'Registry' means the electronic inpatient psychiatric bed registry created pursuant to subsection (b) of this Code section.

(b)(1) The department shall establish and administer an electronic inpatient psychiatric bed registry. The registry shall be a web based resource to identify available psychiatric beds in this state categorized by patient gender, acuteness, age, and diagnosis. The registry shall be accessible through the department's website.

(2) The department may, by contract, delegate the creation, operation, and maintenance of the registry to a private entity.

(c) Psychiatric facilities and other providers identified by the department, who provide diagnosis, care, treatment, or hospitalization of persons who are mentally ill, shall be required to provide the department with the number of inpatient psychiatric beds available in such facilities or by such other providers at the time the information is provided. The information shall be provided by psychiatric facilities and such other providers on a basis as close to real time as practicable. Psychiatric facilities and other providers shall provide the department with such information as specified under subsection (f) of this Code section.

(d) The registry shall be made accessible to end users of the registry, including, but not limited to, prepaid inpatient health plans, licensed health plans, community mental health

services programs, acute care hospitals, psychiatric facilities, and employees and caregivers with other appropriate providers.

(e) The department shall establish an advisory committee to provide guidance on the creation, operation, and maintenance of the registry. The advisory committee shall include representatives from the following groups:

(1) The department;

(2) The Department of Community Health;

(3) Psychiatric facilities;

(4) End users of the registry as described in subsection (d) of this Code section;

(5) Consumers, families, and advocates; and

(6) Law enforcement.

(f) The department, in consultation with the advisory committee, shall establish requirements for reporting information to the department for psychiatric facilities and other providers identified by the department.

(g) The department shall provide quarterly reports on the progress of implementing the registry beginning on October 1, 2025, to the chairpersons of the House Committee on Health, the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, the House Appropriations Health Subcommittee, and the Senate Appropriations Health and Human Development Subcommittee.

(h) The department, in consultation with the advisory committee, may establish a policy for the secondary use of registry data.

(i) The department shall provide all of the information listed on the registry created pursuant to this Code section to the contractor or entity that operates or maintains the Georgia Crisis and Access Line."

SECTION 3.

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