



Senate District 15 — Session Update — 2020

Education

Last week saw the passage of the Dual Enrollment Act, House Bill 444. This legislation will adjust the number of credit hours allowed under the dual enrollment program to a maximum of 30, while also limiting the grade levels allowed to participate. It also restricts the credit hours students take to primarily core courses. This program has been a great success in recent years. Now that we have seen the program in action, we have been gaining input from our educational systems on how better support Dual Enrollment to further ensure the systems success.

Transportation

Last week, joint hearings of the House and Senate Transportation Committees officially approved the Georgia Commission on Freight & Logistics' final report and legislative recommendations. The proposal addresses issues such as workforce development, truck parking, freight rail investment and funding gaps. Additionally, the commission has requested that their work be extended through 2020 to continue their studies on how to best support our state's record-breaking growth where freight and logistics are concerned. House Resolution 935 would reauthorize the commission for 2020 if the resolution is adopted by the House and Senate.

The House Transportation Committee also approved House Bill 820, which would establish the Georgia Freight Railroad Program within the Department of Transportation. This program would increase our investment in our freight rail system, which handles approximately 27 percent of Georgia's freight through the following: Rail Enhancement Plan, Rail Preservation Plan, and the Rail Industrial Plan. The quick growth of our state is a great benefit to all; however, we must ensure that we have proper infrastructure in place to support that growth.

Rural Initiatives

Our work to support our rural communities continues. Last week, the House RDC recommended their ideas for the upcoming year which include further support of our agriculture industry, expanded funding for rural broadband, the creation of tax incentives for rural physicians, as well as the development of a state-funded residency program to bring health care workers to rural areas. I will continue to update you on any progress made where rural legislation is concerned.

Healthcare

Sadly, our state has been experiencing alarming rates of maternal mortality. Over the last several months the House Maternal Mortality study committee has been hard at work developing ideas to decrease and prevent maternal deaths in Georgia. The study committee's final report includes several suggestions to improve mortality rates which include:

- Extending Georgia's Medicaid coverage for pregnant and postpartum women
- Legislation mandating a postmortem examination for any maternal death.
- Increasing accessibility to health care for pregnant and postpartum women through telehealth services.
- Continued funding for programs that support mothers and babies, as well as support various university research initiatives

Maternal health will remain a top priority for us during the 2020 session. These recommendations will serve as a guideline as we work to prevent further deaths.

Tax Reform

Thursday, January 30, brought the Governor's signature to House Bill 276 which was passed first week of session. This bill allows the state to collect taxable revenue from marketplace facilitators whose online platforms or apps are used to sell goods or services. The law will go into effect April 1 and will help level the playing field for our small brick-and-mortar businesses that currently have sale tax charged to their products.