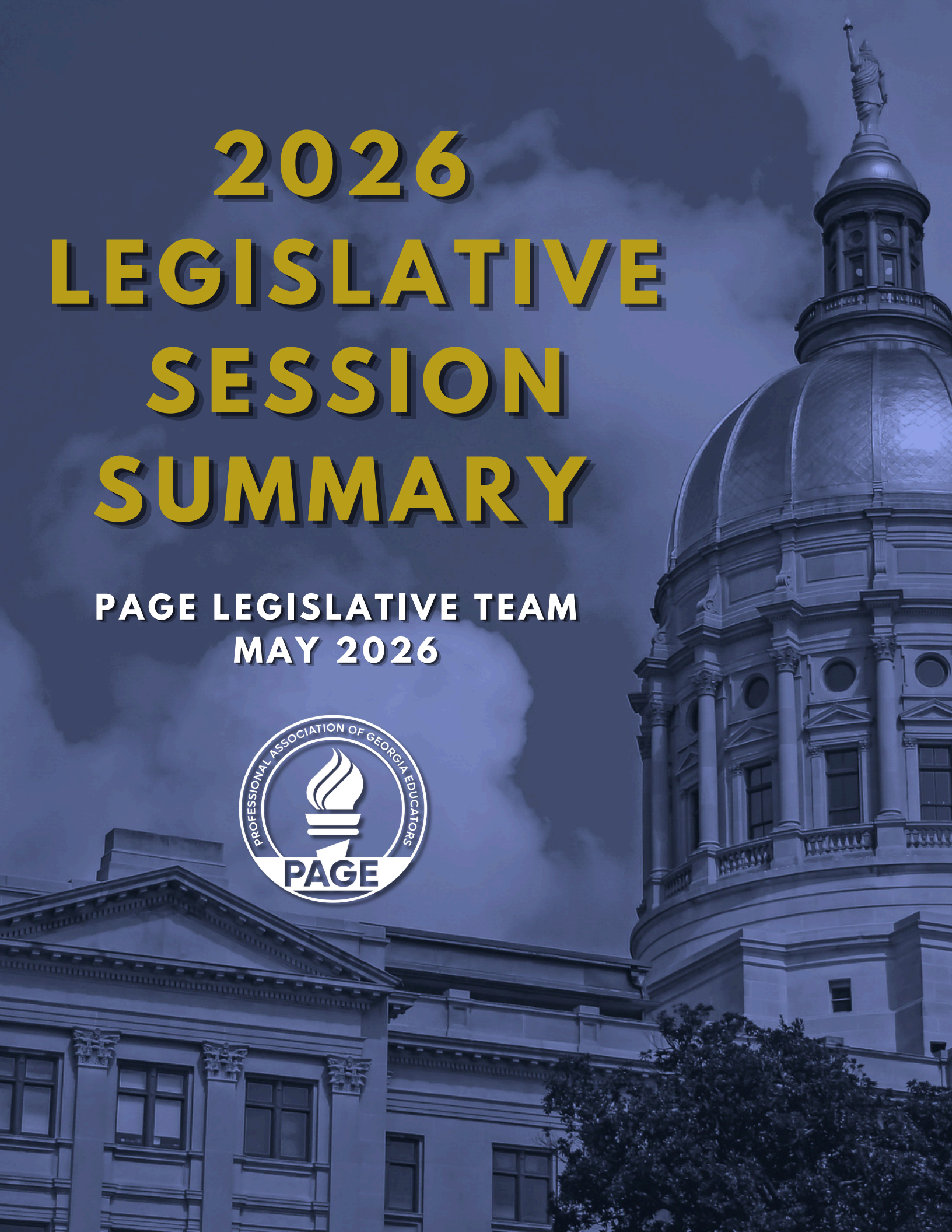


# 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION SUMMARY

PAGE LEGISLATIVE TEAM  
MAY 2026



# PAGE LEGISLATIVE TEAM



***PAGE Legislative Team:***

(Back from Left to Right): Josh Stephens & Robert Aycock  
(Front from Left to Right) Margaret Ciccarelli & Claire Suggs

The PAGE Legislative Team is committed to serving members throughout Georgia.

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# SESSION OVERVIEW

While upcoming elections and tax policy received significant legislative attention during the 2026 legislative session, education continued to be a major focus of the General Assembly. PAGE was present at the Capitol each day, advocating on behalf of PAGE members and the students they serve. The PAGE legislative team promoted multiple bills to strengthen Georgia classrooms and our state's educator pipeline that passed and Gov. Brian P. Kemp subsequently signed. These include bills broadening student cell phone restrictions, expanding a program that allows some retired teachers to return to work while drawing retirement benefits, and enhancing educator leave benefits. PAGE also advocated for state education budget items: additional state funding for literacy coaches and school social workers, and salary enhancements for educators, which included a \$2,000 one-time salary supplement for state-funded educators.

The 2026 legislative session was the second year of the legislative biennium; thus, any bills described in this report that did not pass must be introduced as new legislation in 2027 to be considered. In the 40-day window after the session concluded on April 2, Gov. Kemp signed or vetoed legislation. Bills referenced on pages 2-15 passed and were signed by the governor. Bills that did not win approval are listed in the section labeled "Did Not Pass", which begins on p. 16.

This report also summarizes the Amended Fiscal Year (AFY) 2026 and Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 education budgets. Also noted in the FY 2027 budget section are education budget items which the governor subsequently vetoed due to misalignment between the budget and state revenue estimate.

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# EDUCATOR WORKFORCE

In 2025, the State Senate passed [SR 237 \(2025\)](#) by Sen. Billy Hickman (R-Statesboro). The resolution called upon the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC), in collaboration with several other state agencies and educator associations such as PAGE, to provide the governor and the General Assembly with recommendations to strengthen the K-12 educator workforce. This roundtable developed [Georgia's Strategic Plan for Educator Recruitment and Retention](#). Many bills and resolutions were introduced to implement these recommendations. PAGE is the only organization representing classroom educators to participate in the SR 237 work.

## Return-to-Work

One of PAGE's most important legislative objectives was the reauthorization of the teacher return-to-work (RtW) program. Without action, this program would have expired in 2026 due to the end date of the legislation which created the program. Two bills were considered to address this issue: [SB 150](#), sponsored by Sen. Hickman, and [HB 372](#), sponsored by Rep. Bethany Ballard (R-Warner Robins). While containing differences, both bills sought to extend the RtW program's sunset date while also expanding eligible subjects and program flexibility. PAGE strongly supported both bills and advocated for them throughout the legislative process. Ultimately, the chambers passed SB 150 after modifying its language to include multiple provisions from HB 372.



*SB 150 Author  
Sen. Billy Hickman*

The final version of SB 150 extends the sunset date of the RtW program to 2030. It allows retired educators to work full-time after a one-year waiting period and draw retirement benefits while teaching in qualified positions. The bill allows the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and GaPSC to determine the top three subject areas of need specific to each school district. If a local area of highest need changes in subsequent years, teachers hired in these subject areas can continue participating in the RtW program. SB 150 also designates statewide areas of high need, identifying subject areas in which teachers can return to the classroom, including English language arts (if the teacher holds a current dyslexia or reading endorsement approved by the GaPSC), science, special education, math, and Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE).



*Gov. Brian Kemp Signs  
SB 150 into Law*

**Note:** SB 150 requires teachers to have 30 years of service to be eligible for RtW. An early version of the bill lowered the years of creditable service requirement, but that was changed during the legislative process. SB 150 does not affect any TRS benefits beyond RtW eligibility.

## Educator Leave

**HB 1118** by Rep. Sandy Donatucci (R-Buford) creates a new form of leave for qualified state and local school employees called “maternal birth leave,” providing 120 hours of paid leave to mothers following childbirth. This leave can only be used in the three weeks immediately following childbirth and would precede the use of any other paid parental leave. Eligible employees must complete six months of continuous employment before childbirth. Hourly employees must work 700 hours during the qualifying six-month period.

**SB 148** by Sen. Bo Hatchett (R-Cornelia) authorizes the GaDOE to establish an outdoor learning spaces pilot program in select K-12 schools and gives schools the option to provide hunting safety instruction to students in grades 6-12. The legislation also includes language from **HB 127** by Rep. Brent Cox (R-Dawsonville), which increases the number of sick days an educator may use for personal leave from three to five days, and language from **HB 629** by Rep. Lee Hawkins (R-Gainesville), which removes a requirement of having licensed physicians in automated external defibrillator programs at schools.

## Teacher Preparation

**HB 1107** by Rep. Carmen Rice (R-Columbus), the “Excellent Teacher Preparation Act,” requires GaPSC to develop and annually report comprehensive performance measures for all Georgia educator preparation providers (EPPs). Performance measures focus on the preparedness and performance of EPP graduates and individuals who complete the initial preparation program in certain fields. HB 1107 outlines various metrics, including first- and best-attempt exam passage rates, job placement rates, graduate retention rates, and evaluation scores from EPP graduates, which will be included in these performance measures.

## House Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Educator Workforce

House Speaker Jon Burns (R-Newington) established the **Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Education Performance Metrics and Workforce Stability**. This committee will “evaluate Georgia’s education evaluation measures to strengthen accountability, improve student success, and strengthen teacher recruitment and retention.”

During the legislative session, PAGE worked with Rice on the introduction of **HR 1582**, which would have created the House Study Committee on Veteran Teacher Compensation to study a step increase for veteran teachers at 28 years of experience. Although the resolution did not pass, we expect the blue-ribbon study committee’s scope to include veteran teacher salaries. PAGE will continue advocating for step increases for teachers with more than 21 years of experience. In May, Rep. Ballard was named chair of the blue-ribbon committee, and PAGE will work with her and the committee to continue exploring teacher compensation.



*HB 1107 & HR 1582 Author  
Rep. Carmen Rice*

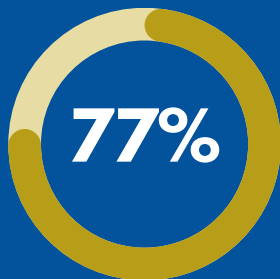
# CELL PHONES IN SCHOOLS

PAGE strongly supported the passage of [HB 1009](#) by Rep. Scott Hilton (R-Peachtree Corners), which bans student use of cell phones and other electronic devices from bell-to-bell in grades 9-12, beginning in the 2027-2028 school year. Students participating in dual enrollment, work-based learning, or apprenticeship programs off campus are excluded from the ban. E-readers are also removed from the list of prohibited devices. Districts must develop policies outlining how students will store phones, establish clear emergency communication plans with parents or guardians, and create a progressive discipline system for students who violate the policy. Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP), Section 504 plans, or other medical plans requiring the use of devices will be permitted access. A K-8 cell phone and device ban takes effect in the 2026-2027 school year, though many schools at all grade levels have already initiated bans.

PAGE conducted a [member survey](#) in 2025 and collaborated with Georgia Southern University (GSU) on a [separate survey of over 3,000 educators](#). Both surveys showed overwhelming educator support for student phone bans and strong confidence in school safety plans, among other findings.



*Margaret Ciccarelli Testifies  
in Support of HB 1009*



Percent of High School Teachers  
Who Adjusted Teaching Practices to  
Manage Student Device Misuse

Georgia Southern  
University Survey  
Findings



Percent of Educators Who Believe  
Student Cell Phones Bans Should  
Extend to High Schools

Speaker Burns and House leaders championed [HB 1193](#), the Georgia Early Literacy Act of 2026, by House Education Chair Chris Erwin (R-Homer). The act makes significant changes to literacy instruction policies and procedures, including mandatory kindergarten requirements, funding and structure for literacy coaches, promotion and retention requirements, and changes to educator preparation programs related to literacy.



*Gov. Brian Kemp Signs HB 1193*

## Literacy Coaches

HB 1193 provides that, subject to legislative appropriation, the SBOE will provide grants to school districts to fund the beginning salary and benefits for one literacy coach at each school. Schools with fewer than 200 Full-Time Equivalents (FTE) will receive 50% of that funding.

HB 1193 provides descriptions, minimum qualifications, and duties for school-based literacy coaches, regional literacy coaches, and regional leadership literacy coaches.

Regional Education Service Areas (RESA) will have two types of regional coaches. Regional literacy coaches will support school-based literacy coaches. Regional literacy leadership coaches will support principals and district leaders.

School-based literacy coaches are prohibited from performing administrative duties, attending placement committee meetings, or being designated as teachers of record. They must spend no less than 70% of the school day in classrooms working directly with teachers and students.

## Screeners

Beginning April 1, 2028 and every three years after, the Georgia Literacy Task Force, a new advisory group housed at the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, is required to recommend a list of two to five university reading screener for SBOE approval. The act revises the requirements screeners must meet for approval.

## High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIMs)

Beginning April 1, 2027, and every four years after, the Georgia Literacy Task Force is required to recommend HQIMs aligned with the science of reading for grades K-3 to the SBOE for approval. The SBOE will also determine a reasonable level of funding to assist local districts purchase HQIMs and recommend this amount to the General Assembly for its consideration. Beginning in the 2029-2030 school year, districts cannot use state funds to purchase instructional materials for literacy that are not approved by the SBOE.

## Unified Literacy Plans and School District Waivers

The act requires school districts to implement unified literacy plans that establish measurable literacy goals based on assessment data. Beginning Jan. 1, 2027, systems without these plans are unable to receive system waivers and cannot enter or renew flexibility contracts.

## State Literacy Leadership

The act establishes the Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee, which will be comprised of representatives of GaDOE and RESAs as well as literacy experts. It will be chaired by State Literacy Director, a new position at GOSA, who will work with committee members to provide oversight and accountability for the implementation of the literacy reforms outlined in the act and coordinate all state-wide literacy programs across agencies. The act sunsets the Georgia Council on Literacy in December 2026.



*HB 1193 Author,  
Rep. Chris Erwin*

## **First and Second Grade Promotion**

If kindergarten and first-grade students are determined to be significantly at risk for not reaching grade-level proficiency prior to advancing to first grade or second grade, respectively, schools must develop and implement tiered reading intervention plans. If students remain significantly at risk for not reaching grade-level proficiency after the implementation of the intervention plans, they will be retained unless their parents appeal this decision. If an appeal is pursued, a placement committee consisting of the school principal, the student's teacher, and the student's parents/guardians will review the student's literacy progress and determine if the student is ready for promotion. Students may only be promoted if unanimously approved by the placement committee. Students promoted by the placement committee must be continually assessed the following year for progress monitoring. For students with an IEP, IEP committees will be the students' placement committees. These new promotion policies will take effect in the 2027-2028 school year.

## **Pre-K & Kindergarten Enrollment**

The act allows parents of children aged four or five to enroll in a Georgia Pre-K program. It also allows parents of children who are six and enrolling for the first time to enroll them in kindergarten if the parents believe their children are not ready for first grade. The act requires students to attend kindergarten before enrolling in first grade unless the student is six by September 1 and is determined by local district staff to be ready for first grade based on an assessment that includes a first-grade readiness assessment, universal reading screener, teacher input, parental preference, and other relevant information. The act also makes children who are five and enroll in a public school for 20 or more school days prior to their sixth birthday subject to compulsory school attendance requirements.

## **Educator Preparation Programs**

The GaPSC must develop a process to review each educator preparation program (EPP) every four years and provide an annual report of its review and findings to legislators and other stakeholders. It must also create a literacy coach endorsement by Dec. 30, 2026.

**HB 1030** by Rep. Donatucci, titled the “Math Matters Act,” makes several significant changes to math instruction in Georgia, including requiring the adoption of new math standards, increasing required mathematics instructional time to at least 60 minutes daily or 300 minutes weekly, automatically enrolling certain high-performing students in advanced math courses, and imposing new requirements for educator certification. Bill provisions cannot be waived by school districts. HB 1030 also requires GaDOE to report various data on student math assessment performance and the number of students enrolled in advanced math courses. These changes will begin with the 2027-2028 school year and will not be waivable by schools as part of a charter system or strategic waiver school system contract.

## CHARTER SCHOOL OMNIBUS

Each year, bills that did not advance far enough in the legislative process are combined with other bills that have advanced further. In 2026, the education-related combination bill was **SB 369** by Sen. Shawn Still (R-Norcross), which established and defined "Dropout Recovery Charter Schools" that primarily serve students at high risk of dropping out. The bill calls on the SBOE to develop rules and regulations governing Dropout Recovery Charter schools and requires GOSA to separately report on the schools' performance.

SB 369 also includes language that was originally found in three separate bills:

- **HB 1218**, by Rep. Robert Flournoy (D-Hampton), allows students in grades 6-12 who attend a public virtual school full-time to participate in interscholastic and extracurricular activities in their resident school system.
- **HB 1206**, by Rep. Todd Jones (R-South Forsyth), requires local boards of education and other public school governing bodies to consider the total cost of ownership — including repair costs, flexibility for innovation, and anticipated resale or salvage value — when purchasing school technology devices. The bill requires local school governing authorities to submit a report to GaDOE on the total number of technology devices in use, as well as the repair rates and costs. HB 1206 applies to devices costing \$100 or more and changes the reporting deadline to Oct. 15 of each year.
- **HB 1257**, by Rep. Rice, provides charter school incentive grants for local boards of education to approve charter school petitions. The total amount of incentive grants provided under this subsection shall not exceed \$2.25 million in any fiscal year. The bill also directs the State Charter Schools Commission not to act on a charter petition unless the local board of education that authorizes the charter school terminates or fails to renew the charter contract. During the committee process, Rice framed the grant program as a targeted investment to encourage more local charter consideration throughout Georgia.

# SCHOOL ZONE SPEED CAMERAS

After two years of legislative consideration and debate, the General Assembly approved [HB 651](#) by Rep. Alan Powell (R-Hartwell). The legislation changes the process by which local government may approve and operate school zone speed cameras. HB 651 allows local referendums before a municipality or county approves a new speed camera contract. Each election authorizes the cameras for six years, after which another referendum is required for continued use.

## CTAE

[HB 1302](#) by Rep. Matthew Gambill (R-Cartersville), the Education and Workforce Strategy Act, was a priority of Gov. Kemp. The bill renames GOSA the Governor's Office of Education and Workforce Strategy (GOEWS) and expands the agency's role in aligning education, workforce development, and data governance across state agencies while ending the Alliance of Education Agency Heads. It requires GaDOE and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) to create a combined Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Plan and Perkins Act Plan. It also designates TCSG as the state's apprenticeship agency. The bill establishes the Education Data Governance Board within GOEWS to coordinate cross agency data sharing. HB 1302 also creates a career navigation tool to be developed and operated by GOEWS and funded in the FY 2027 budget.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

[SB 556](#) by Sen. Chuck Payne (R-Dalton) provides for the inclusion of advanced fine arts courses, including Advanced Placement, Cambridge, and International Baccalaureate courses, in the calculation of student grade point averages for HOPE eligibility or other scholarship determination. Several other higher education-related bills, including Gov. Kemp's Dedicating Resources to Educationally Advance More Students (DREAMS) Scholarship program, were also added to SB 556. The DREAM program is the state's first need-based financial aid program. It will provide up to \$3,000 per year for up to eight semesters or 12 quarters for students with unmet financial need.

## DISCRIMINATION IN SCHOOLS

[SB 523](#), by Sen. Russ Goodman (R-Cogdell), originally required public schools and institutions of higher education to treat antisemitism as they would religious discrimination. The final version of the bill made it nearly identical to [HB 1363](#), by Rep. Deborah Silcox (R-Atlanta), which creates a statewide coordinator position within GaDOE to monitor and report on complaints of discrimination in public schools. If schools fail to take corrective action arising from a discrimination complaint, the SBOE is authorized to act, including withholding state funds. The bill also requires the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia and the State Board of the Technical College System of Georgia to establish policies and procedures for handling discrimination complaints.

# SCHOOL CHOICE

**HB 328** by Rep. Kasey Carpenter (R-Dalton) expands Georgia's tuition tax credit Student Scholarship Organization (SSO) program, which currently diverts \$120 million from the state general fund to private school vouchers. The final version of this PAGE-opposed legislation increases the \$120 million cap to \$150 million annually (down from \$220 million in an earlier Senate version of the bill). HB 328 also expands the waiver of the SSO program's current six-week public school enrollment requirement to include children of active-duty military members, students with IEPs or 504 plans, and students with certain disabilities. It also includes language prohibiting General Assembly members and their spouses from receiving income from a student scholarship organization. Language from **HB 565** by Rep. Rick Townsend (R-Brunswick), increasing the PEACH Education Tax Credit from \$15 million to \$25 million, was added to HB 328, as was language from **HB 1259** by Rep. Matt Dubnik (R-Gainesville). Dubnik's provisions prohibit local school systems that fail to maintain an average College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) score of at least 65 for the previous two school years from providing virtual instruction to out-of-district students. School systems are required to compile a list of out-of-district student enrollment by October and March of each year. Out-of-district virtual students are excluded from equalization funding calculations. HB 328 also includes language restricting the use of Transit Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) funds and imposing an eight-year waiting period before any failed Transit SPLOST referendum can be resubmitted to voters.

# STUDENT POLITICAL ACTIVITY

**SB 552** by Sen. Ben Watson (R-Savannah), the True Patriotism and Universal Student Access (TPUSA) Act, emphasizes that students may engage in political activities and expression, as well as form partisan or nonpartisan groups or activities, before, during, and after the school day. The legislation prohibits public schools with a limited open forum from denying access or discriminating against student groups based on the content of their speech, including political, philosophical, or ideological viewpoints. SB 552 permits students to wear clothing and accessories that display political messages or symbols to the same extent as other messages are permitted under a school's dress code. The bill explicitly states that it does not limit schools' authority to maintain order and discipline on school premises, to protect the well-being of students and staff, to ensure that student attendance at meetings is voluntary, and to enforce student attendance policies. Schools also retain the ability to prohibit or restrict conduct involving threats, violence, or harassment, or any conduct that could be reasonably forecast to infringe the rights of other students.

# SCHOOL FINANCE

In the wake of financial management issues in Dublin City Schools, legislators passed two bills significantly altering the audit process for school systems.

**HB 1164** by Rep. Will Wade (R-Dawsonville) requires the SBOE to appoint an audit committee to review reports and assess the financial health of local school systems, and it revises financial audit provisions for school districts and state charter schools. The bill requires the Department of Audits and Accounts (DOAA) to create a tiered system to monitor the financial conditions of local districts and state charter schools, and to institute interventions for those identified as in fiscal distress or in critical fiscal emergencies. GOSA's authority to conduct performance audits of school districts, including review of district waivers, is expanded by HB 1164.

**SB 472** by Sen. Hickman expands the authority of the SBOE and the DOAA regarding fiscal oversight and governance of local school districts. The bill adds additional triggers to suspend or remove local board members, including if the state auditor deems a district high-risk or finds it engaged in financial mismanagement or misconduct. SB 472 establishes procedures for hearings, temporary board appointments, reinstatement petitions for board members suspended from their positions, and the permanent removal of board members. In addition to board governance provisions, the bill caps advance distribution of state-provided education funding at 50% of a school district's prior-year allotment, unless the state auditor determines that a larger advance is necessary. Districts will also be required to adopt and comply with state-directed financial monitoring and intervention plans assigned by the state auditor. SB 472 limits the length of contracts for superintendents of districts designated as high risk by DOAA to one year. If a superintendent's contract is for more than one year, it will be considered void. Any new employment contracts for superintendents of high-risk districts must not be the subject of a state auditor finding of financial mismanagement or misconduct. Superintendents must not knowingly fail to comply with assigned corrective action plans. If superintendents violate the stipulations, local boards are authorized to terminate superintendents' contracts. Finally, SB 472 lowers the percentage of eligible voters needed to trigger a local referendum to dissolve a local independent school system and fold it into the relevant county school system from 25% of voters to 10%.

Property tax reform was another major subject of debate during the 2026 legislative session. The House and the Senate each released tax reform proposals, which underwent multiple revisions. In the end, the chambers passed **SB 33**, the Homeownership Opportunity and Market Equalization Act of 2026. Originally introduced as the Georgia Hemp Farming Act by Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick (R-Marietta), the bill's provisions were stripped by the Senate and replaced with tax provisions. SB 33 places all local governments, including school systems, into a floating homestead exemption that limits increases in the taxable value of homes to the prior year's rate of inflation. Previously, local governments could opt out of this exemption, but SB 33 removes that option. The bill allows local exemptions, including the floating homestead exemption, to count toward the calculation of the local five mill share of Quality Basic Education (QBE) and toward equalization grants. SB 33 also increases the statutory cap on local school district reserve funds from 15% of the budget to 25%.

# STATE EDUCATION BUDGET

The AFY 2026 and the FY 2027 budgets provide funds for strategic investments in education, including new funding for literacy, the pre-kindergarten program, and the State Health Benefit Program (SHBP). Both budgets also include routine funding adjustments in formula-based items, including the QBE formula, due to enrollment changes or other updated information.

Gov. Kemp and the General Assembly developed and passed [HB 974](#), the FY 2027 budget, based on Kemp's original FY 2027 revenue estimate, which he announced in January. The state's budget must match the revenue estimate. After approving the FY 2027 budget, legislators passed [HB 463](#), which cuts the state income tax rate and raises the standard deduction. This will reduce the state's expected FY 2027 revenue by approximately \$1.3 billion, creating a deficit. To begin closing this gap, on May 12, 2026, Kemp cut \$300 million from the FY 2027 budget, including eliminating increases in funding for several items within GaDOE and DECAL's budgets. Funds were also cut from other state agencies. At the press conference at which he signed the budget, Kemp indicated that he expects revenue to grow throughout the coming year, which will help fill the budget gap, and that lawmakers can tap the state's budget reserves if necessary. Recinded budget items are noted in the FY 2027 budget description. Click [HERE](#) for a full list of Kemp's budget disregards.

## AFY 2026 Budget



### \$2,000 Salary Supplement

The AFY 2026 budget includes \$366 million to provide a one-time salary supplement of \$2,000 to K-12 educators whose positions are funded by the state. Districts will determine how to extend the supplement to staff members whose positions are not funded by the state, which will vary based on district-specific financial circumstances. The AFY 2026 budget also includes \$17 million to provide the salary supplement to pre-K lead and assistant teachers.



### More School Social Workers

Lawmakers added \$1.4 million for school social workers to the AFY 2026 budget in addition to funds for two pilot programs: \$750,000 for a pilot program to help districts secure maximum reimbursement for mental health services, and \$550,000 for an emergency response system pilot program.



### DREAM Scholarship Funding

Lawmakers provided \$325 million to the AFY 2026 budget to launch the DREAM Scholarship program, the state's first comprehensive need-based financial aid program for postsecondary students, an initiative championed by Gov. Kemp.

## FY 2027 Budget



### Literacy Coach Funding

The FY 2027 budget contains \$70 million in new funding to provide a literacy coach for every school serving grades K-3. GOSA will receive an increase of \$2.4 million to support statewide literacy work, including reviewing and recommending universal reading screeners and high-quality instructional materials (HQIMs) and providing professional development to teachers, coaches and administrators.



### Increased Student Support Funding

**VETOED:** Lawmakers added **\$2 million** for the SUN Bucks program, which will enable the state to tap federal funds to provide summer meals to economically disadvantaged students. **VETOED:** They also increased funding for the BOOST program, which provides out-of-school programs to students, by **\$2.5 million**. With Kemp's veto, total funding for the BOOST program remains at \$12.5 million in FY 2027.



### School Bus Replacement

**VETOED:** The FY 2027 budget adds \$38 million for pupil transportation grants to districts to reflect updated bus counts and operations. Kemp retained \$7.5 million of this amount to update bus counts but vetoed the remaining \$30.6 million. **VETOED:** Lawmakers added **\$1.6 million** for high-demand equipment and heavy equipment grants for CTAE programs, plus **\$1 million** for an artificial intelligence and coding program.



### Health Insurance Cost Increases

Lawmakers added \$71 million to cover an increase in the per member per month (PMPM) cost of the SHBP, from \$1,885 to \$1,935, for certified educators including Pre-K teachers in FY 2027. The PMPM cost is rising by the same amount for school district staff who are not certified such as bus drivers, paraprofessionals, and administrative assistants. Districts cover the cost of health care for non-certified staff members. This increase, while smaller than the increase originally proposed by lawmakers, heightens pressure on districts' budgets.



### Pre-K Funding

The Pre-K program gets a boost of \$9.7 million in the FY 2027 budget to cover afterschool and holiday care for 2,448 students. Lawmakers provided \$700,000 in new funds and reallocated **\$881,000 (VETOED)** to add 50 new Rising Pre-K classes, which serve dual language learners. With Kemp's disregard, only 25 new Rising Pre-K classes will be funded. Lawmakers also added \$4 million and reallocated \$5.7 million to provide 5 days of leave for Pre-K lead and assistant teachers. Kemp **VETOED \$2.7 million** of this funding.

## OTHER PASSED BILLS

**HB 907**, by outgoing House Speaker Pro Tempore Jan Jones (R-Milton), requires local school systems located within the attendance zone of a completion special school to either enter into a collaborative operating agreement with the school or provide comparable programs and services for students in grades 9–12. Required services include dropout prevention, academic intervention, credit recovery, and flexible scheduling. Parents or guardians can directly register eligible students for participation in completion special school programs. HB 907 mandates coordination between completion special schools and resident school systems when a student is not currently enrolled. The bill also requires completion special schools to provide program information to resident school systems twice annually, and school systems must share this information with students and families. Additionally, school systems must provide contact information for students who stop attending or withdraw within 10 school days, establish parameters for operating programs outside assigned attendance zones, and authorize transition periods for affected students.

**HB 1123**, also sponsored by Rep. Jan Jones, requires any public school that offers afterschool programs to offer them to its pre-K students in the same manner they are offered to other students. The Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is authorized to grant annual waivers of this requirement to schools demonstrating extenuating circumstances. HB 1123 would take effect in the 2026-2027 school year.

**HB 1284**, by Rep. Silcox, the Gakobe Milton Act, requires high school diplomas to be awarded to students diagnosed with terminal medical conditions who are receiving end-of-life care. The bill outlines the process and procedures for requesting and awarding these diplomas and states that, while every effort should be made to award the diplomas before the student's death, they may be awarded posthumously.

**HB 1293**, another by Rep. Jan Jones, removes the pilot status of the Dual Achievement Program and changes its entrance requirements. HB 1293 aims to ensure that students eligible to participate in the Dual Achievement Program in metro Atlanta districts that will not be included in a completion special school consortium will be able to continue participating in existing programs.

**HB 1379**, by Rep. Houston Gaines (R-Athens), the Foreign Funding Transparency and Accountability Act, requires all public educational institutions in Georgia, including local school systems, to report funding totaling \$10,000 or more from a “foreign source of concern.” Foreign sources of concern include specific countries, entities, and individuals identified as foreign adversaries, countries of particular concern, or those associated with terrorism or religious freedom violations, as well as certain entities and individuals associated with these countries. Failure to report such funds can result in state funding being withheld.

**HB 1409**, by Rep. Beth Camp (R-Concord), allows mandated child abuse and neglect reporters, including educators, to use a secure web-based platform to make required reports. Currently, mandated reporters can make required reports by phone, email, or by completing a form on the designated website. The bill also adds firefighters and animal control officers to the list of mandated reporters.

**[SB 284](#)**, by Senate President Pro Tempore Larry Walker (R-Perry), includes language allowing low-wealth capital outlay grants specifically for roof improvements. This language is similar to that found in **[HB 669](#)** by Rep. Steven Meeks (R-Screven).

**[SB 431](#)**, by Sen. Kirkpatrick, requires schools to enroll foster care transfer students within three days. The legislation prohibits assigning foster care students to remote learning due to missing records. If schools fail to comply, they must provide parents or guardians with contact information for the appropriate RESA student affairs officer and GaDOE's chief privacy officer (CPO). GaDOE could require schools to implement a corrective action plan upon the request of the RESA student affairs officer or the CPO.



*Josh Stephens Testifies  
on SB 431*

**[SB 589](#)**, by Sen. Matt Brass (R-Newnan), requires schools to allow children who reach ages four and five by Sept. 1 to enroll in a voluntary pre-K program at the request of the child's parent or guardian. The bill mandates that children of any age be treated the same when selecting available spots for such programs. The bill explicitly states that it neither requires nor permits a child to be enrolled in a program for more than one year. SB 589 allows parents of children who would otherwise be eligible to enter first grade to enroll their child in kindergarten instead. Additionally, the bill includes language from **[HB 1045](#)**, by Rep. Tangie Herring (D-Macon), the "You Are Not Alone Awareness Act." Those provisions require student identification badges in grades 6-12 include specific information about the 988 crisis hotline.

**[SB 179](#)**, by Sen. Clint Dixon (R-Gwinnett), establishes a high school computer science requirement for students graduating in 2037 or later. This requirement takes effect in the 2031-2032 school year. The legislation raises the per-course reimbursement rate for the Georgia Virtual School from \$250 to \$350, and it allows civic organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Club, Scouting America, Girl Scouts, and similar groups, to promote their organizations at a school after obtaining the school's permission.

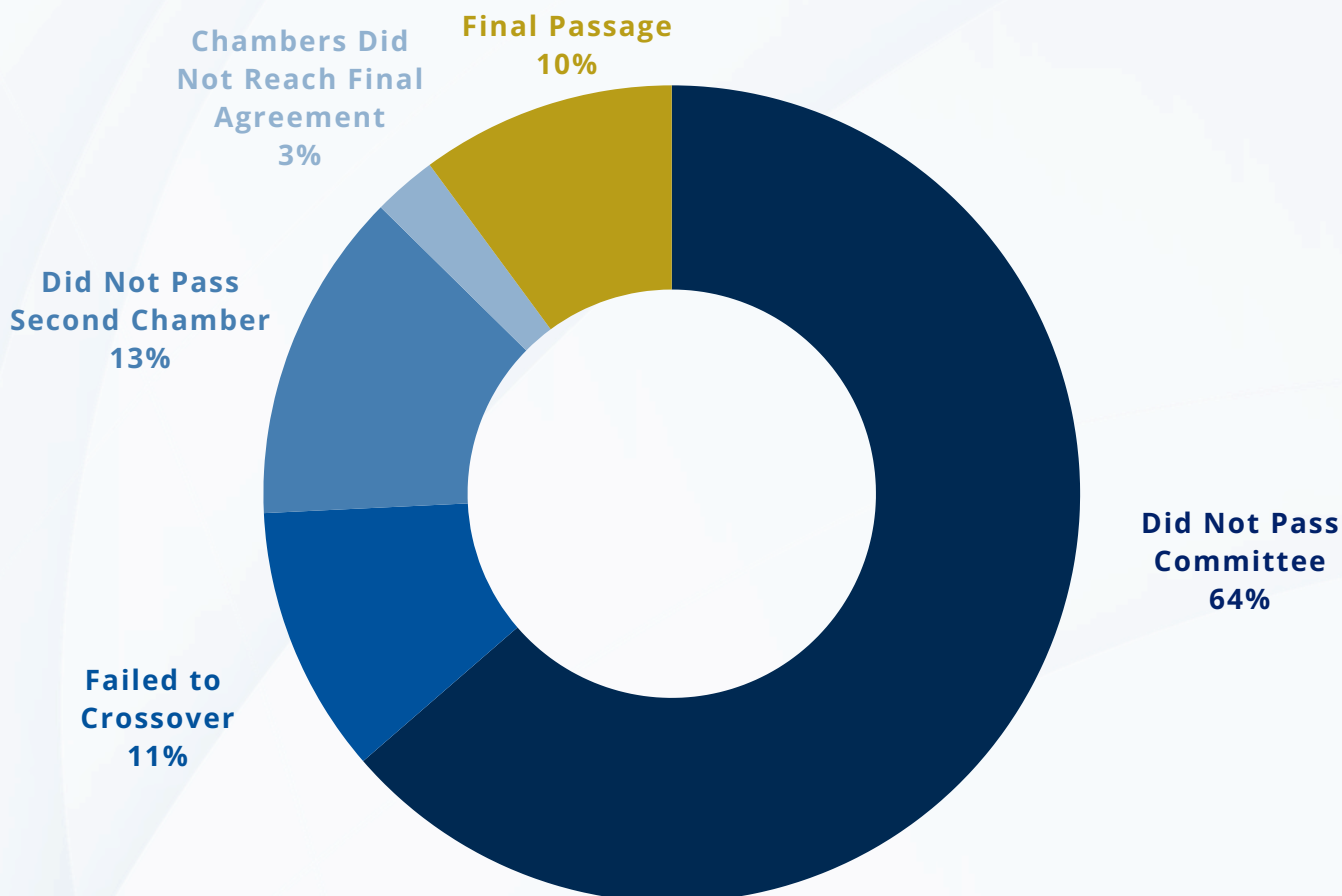
**[SR 545](#)**, by Sen. RaShaun Kemp (D-Atlanta), creates a study committee on paid student teaching.

**[SR 553](#)**, by Sen. Sonya Halpern (D-Atlanta), creates a study committee on funding for charter school capital improvements.

**[SR 952](#)**, by Sen. Gail Davenport (D-Jonesboro), creates a study committee on Rosenwald Schools.

# 2026 BILLS THAT DID NOT PASS

## Fate of 2026 Bills Assigned to Education Committees



Hundreds of bills were introduced by House and Senate members in 2026. Even more bills, originally introduced in 2025, were viable for continued consideration. As is the case in most legislative sessions, only a fraction of bills obtained final passage and were sent to the governor. Many bills failed to advance out of their assigned committees, including those assigned to the House and Senate Education committees. Ultimately, only 10% of education bills obtained final passage. In some cases, as is noted in this report, the language of failed bills was attached to other pieces of legislation.

While some bills that failed to pass could have had negative impacts on Georgia public schools, several positive initiatives also failed to make it across the legislative finish line. As the 2026 Legislative Session is the second year of the biennium, all failed bills and resolutions introduced this year or in 2025 are now considered dead. If a legislator wishes to reintroduce a similar initiative next year, a new bill must be filed and the process starts over.

## Bills That Did Not Pass: Educator Workforce

**HB 310**, the Student Teacher Promotion Act, by Rep. Phil Olaleye (D-Atlanta), would have created a needs-based student-teacher grant program for up to 500 student teachers eligible to receive the Pell Grant. Under this PAGE-supported bill, participating student teachers would have received up to \$5,000 to help offset the costs of student teaching. Additionally, they would have been eligible to receive a \$2,500 signing bonus grant if they worked in a Georgia public school.



*Robert Aycock Testifies  
In Support of HB 310*



*HB 310 Author, Rep. Phil Olaleye*

**HB 969**, by Rep. Townsend, would have allowed retired educators who run for local boards of education to choose to retain a SHBP retired plan or elect to receive the same SHBP plans as full-time educators.

**HB 1244**, a PAGE-supported bill by Rep. Akbar Ali (D-Lawrenceville), would have required school districts to offer teachers planning time and would have removed districts' ability to waive these requirements as part of their district flexibility contracts.

**SB 209**, by Sen. Goodman, would have allowed Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS) members to irrevocably opt in to TRS. The legislation was presented as a tool to help districts incentivize recruitment and retention of hard-to-fill positions.



*Margaret Ciccarelli Testifies  
in Support of HB 1244*

**SB 487**, also by Sen. Hickman, would have established the Education Workforce Data Governance Advisory Committee within GOSA to advise and assist with the collection, analysis, and use of education workforce data to bolster educator recruitment and retention. In testimony, Hickman said the committee was intended to codify the cross-agency work started by the SR 237 roundtable.

**SB 515**, another PAGE-supported bill by Sen. Hickman, would have continued the teacher tax credit and made several changes to the program, in line with a recommendation from the SR 237 strategic plan for educator recruitment and retention. Without legislative reauthorization, the current program is slated to end this year.

## **Bills That Did Not Pass: Absenteeism**

**SB 513**, the Every Day Counts Act by Sen. Jason Dickerson (R-Canton) sought to codify recommendations of the [\*\*Senate Study Committee on Combating Chronic Absenteeism in Schools\*\*](#). The bill would have required local school systems to adopt a multi-tiered framework of attendance supports and interventions. A chronically unexcused student was identified as one with five unexcused absences during the first 50 days of the school year. After the 50th school day, a chronically unexcused student was defined as one who missed 10% of the total number of school days. SB 513 would have also established attendance review teams at the district level and, in some cases, at the school level to review cases and develop written attendance intervention plans in collaboration with chronically unexcused students and their parents or guardians. Schools would have been required to regularly update compliance records, designate chronically unexcused students as ineligible for extracurricular and interscholastic activities until an intervention plan is in place, and report noncompliance with the plans to GaDOE. SB 513 said that a student may be prevented from obtaining a permit or driver's license unless the student is enrolled in school or compliant with an approved attendance intervention plan. The driver's license provision garnered opposition from both parties.

## Bills that did Not Pass: Charter Schools

**HB 1308**, by Rep. Silcox, would have expanded and enhanced charter schools' ability to acquire unused public-school properties. The bill changes the definition of "unused facilities" to include properties that are not in use or not used as educational facilities, provided that at least 60% of the space was dedicated to direct student instruction within the previous two school years.

**SB 475**, by Sen. Kemp, would have required local boards of education to treat local charter schools no less favorably than other local schools for SPLOST proceeds. The bill would have also lowered the percentage of eligible voters needed to trigger a local referendum on dissolving a city school district into a county district from 25% to 10%.

**SB 498**, by Sen. Dixon, would have established the Georgia Charter School Facilities Authority. The authority would provide revolving loan funds or other types of financial assistance to charter schools to build, renovate, or rehabilitate facilities. Loans would be capped at \$2 million or 20% of the total project cost, whichever is lower, or, for renovation projects, at \$200,000.

## Bills that did Not Pass: Elected Superintendents

**HR 1348**, by Rep. Powell, proposed a constitutional amendment allowing the General Assembly the ability to pass local laws allowing for the election of superintendents, if first approved by local referendum.

## Bills that did Not Pass: School Safety

**HB 1023**, by Rep. Chuck Efstoration (R-Mulberry), would have required at least one weapon-detection system at the main entry points of school buildings. The requirement would not have applied to entry points that are locked, alarmed, and not intended for student use. Districts could have used current school safety funding or any other funding sources to purchase the equipment. Additional bond funding was approved in the FY 2027 budget for school safety.

**HB 1327**, by Rep. Jason Ridley (R-Chatsworth), would have mandated the installation of at least one exterior key box at every public and private school building. The bill outlined installation requirements and provided schools and their employees with civil liability immunity for any damages arising from the installation and use of the key boxes.

**HB 1445**, by Rep. Townsend, would have required the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to share near-real-time GPS monitoring and exclusion violations of juvenile offenders with local law enforcement and school systems upon their request for such information.

## Bills that did Not Pass: Curriculum & Materials

**HB 1114**, by Rep. Bill Yearta (R-Sylvester), would have required students in grades 9-12 to complete a financial literacy course that included in-depth treatment of real-world scenarios and gambling risk analysis. Starting with the 2027-2028 school year, schools would have been required to provide grade-appropriate financial literacy instruction to students in grades K-8. HB 1114 would also have required schools to provide grade-appropriate instruction in digital literacy to students in grades K-12, starting in the 2027-28 school year.

**HB 1269**, by Rep. Wade, would have expanded Georgia's current online safety standards to include instruction in digital literacy for students in grades K-12.

**SB 74**, by Sen. Max Burns (R-Sylvania), would have opened librarians to criminal prosecution for knowingly distributing materials deemed harmful to minors. The bill was amended in a House committee so that the criminal charge applied only to people who fail to comply with their governing authorities' decisions issued in response to requests or complaints regarding materials harmful to minors. PAGE strongly opposed SB 74.



*Robert Aycock Testifies  
In Opposition to SB 74*

**SB 425**, by Sen. Marty Harbin (R-Tyrone), would have required all schools serving students in grades three, four, or five that receive state funding to provide instruction in cursive handwriting to all students no later than third grade. The bill also added language from **HB 629** by Rep. Hawkins regarding training and utilization of bleeding control kits in schools and language from **SB 557** by Sen. Payne, which would have mandated districts adopt policies allowing a public school employee who is the victim of an act of physical violence committed by a student or a student's parent or guardian to transfer to a similar position within the same school system, if one is available.

## Bills that did Not Pass: Vouchers

**HB 419**, by Rep. Hawkins, had its language stripped in the Senate and replaced with language that would have made several changes to Georgia's Special Needs Scholarship private school voucher program, including increased reporting of data, prohibition of unaccredited schools not in the process of becoming accredited, and a list of changes to the Georgia Promise Scholarship private school voucher program.

**HB 634**, by Rep. Carter Barrett (R-Cumming), clarified the process for determining the award amount for students who receive a private school voucher through the Special Needs Scholarship program, which is based on their IEP. The bill would have expedited the distribution of the award and specified the data to be included in the program's annual report, prepared by GOSA.

**HB 1135**, by Rep. Hilton, would have enabled Georgia to participate in the federal **Education Freedom Tax Credit program created by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA)** and would have automatically opted Georgia into the program each year. **SB 446** by Sen. Dixon was identical to HB 1135 and also did not pass.

**HB 1220**, by Rep. Ballard, would have exempted students with an IEP, a Section 504 plan, or a diagnosis of dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder, speech language delay and disorder, or other identified condition from the six-week public school attendance requirement to be eligible for a private school voucher awarded by a SSO. Students whose parents are active military personnel stationed in Georgia would also have been exempted from the six-week attendance requirement. The legislation included language, suggested by PAGE, requiring participating private schools to disclose medical or behavioral conditions they accommodate.

**SB 445**, by Sen. Greg Dolezal (R-Cumming), would have changed several aspects of the Georgia Promise Scholarship private school voucher program at the request of the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC). A list of changes proposed in the bill is available [here](#).

## Bills that did Not Pass: Study Committees

*Note: As previously stated, the House did not pass study committee resolutions in 2026 and instead subsequently announced the creation of several blue-ribbon committees. The House Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Education Performance Metrics and Workforce Stability may examine the topics proposed below.*

**HR 1529**, by Rep. Ballard, would have created the House Study Committee on the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI).

**HR 1582**, by Rep. Rice, would have created the House Study Committee on Veteran Teacher Compensation to study a step increase for veteran teachers at 28 years of experience. PAGE worked with Rep. Rice to introduce the resolution and appreciates her responsiveness to the needs of veteran teachers who continue to express concern about the lack of state salary steps beyond 21 years.

**HR 1947**, by Rep. Shaw Blackmon (R-Bonaire), would have created a study committee on education finance.

