

# Under the Gold Dome



## District 149 Legislative Update – July 2017



While the summer season comes to an end, the excitement and buzz of a new school year begins! As some enjoyed vacations and a relaxing break, Georgia government was in full swing, beginning anew on July 1 with the start of our new Fiscal Year. The first day of July is also the day when most laws passed in the previous session go into effect. Although we review hundreds of bills, education is always a top priority for the General Assembly.

While there is no silver bullet approach to addressing every issue all at once, we have taken steps to find policy oriented solutions year after year. Through the creation and findings of the Education Reform Commission and the statewide Teachers Advisory Committee, we have passed laws aimed at the overall improvement of our education systems. During 2016 we saw bills go into effect which revised teacher evaluations, incentivized STEM courses for students, lessened state mandated testing requirements, as well as, a bill which eased the process for the creation of college and career academies.

This year, efforts to improve education remained at the forefront of our session work, as once again over half the state's budget was allocated towards future initiatives. As we jump into a new school year, below you will find a quick review of bills, which went into effect July 1, all aimed towards the improvement of our Georgia school systems!

**House Bill 139** promotes transparency within our public-school systems by requiring the Department of Education to post certain school-level budget and expenditure information, excluding information made confidential by law, on its website.

**House Bill 224** changes the 'Quality Basic Education Act' to allow military students to attend any school within their school system, if space is available, beginning in the 2017-2018 school year.

**House Bill 237** allows the establishment of the Public Education Innovation Fund Foundation. The foundation may receive donations to provide grants to public schools for the improvement of student achievement. Funds will be awarded through a competitive grant process.

**House Bill 338** creates an alternative "Turnaround" school system which will support and provide assistance for the lowest-performing schools which receive below a 60 on the statewide accountability system for three consecutive years.

**House Bill 463** allows the Department of Early Care and Learning to incorporate a non-profit corporation which will aid the department in promoting public-private partnerships between businesses, non-profit organizations, higher education institutions, local school systems, public schools, as well as, early care and education programs.

**Senate Bill 211** ensures dual-enrollment students are not penalized by local school systems for taking collegiate coursework while still in high school. Under the bill, no school system can exclude a dual-enrolled student from eligibility for class valedictorian or salutatorian.

As your Representative, I know the importance of our local school systems. I also know that success is much more difficult without adequate support from the state level. I promise to continue do my best in looking out for the best interests of our students, educators and administrators when considering future legislation. Thank you to all of those that serve in our education sector. It can be a thankless, demanding job but I assure you, your hard work does not go unnoticed. I truly appreciate the impact you make on a daily basis and I encourage you to contact me with your thoughts and input regarding education. It is a true pleasure to serve you and our great district. I sincerely thank each and every one of you for your words of encouragement and support. God bless you and may God continue to bless the great state of Georgia!