Leadership Changes

The Child Welfare Reform Council (CWRC) was established by the governor in 2014 to tackle serious systemic issues plaguing the state's child welfare system. The CWRC, chaired by Stephen Bliss and Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) Director Bobby Cagle, quickly developed an ambitious and comprehensive action plan child welfare reform. Last year, as we reported, the legislature established three study committees to examine children's health needs, all of which highlighted serious gaps in children's access to behavioral health services in Georgia. Some issues in funding were proposed to be addressed for school nurses, residential treatment facilities, and positive behavioral supports for schools. However, sed did not see any comprehensive proposals瞄准 comprehensive changes.

Mental Health – Gaining Momentum

Despite recent progress, DFCS continues to struggle with a high turnover rate, a lack of foster care placements, and other challenges. The governor highlighted further proposed investments in DFCS in his 2017 State of the State Address, including an unprecedented 19 percent average increase to DFCS workers' pay.

Safe Harbor Yes – Amendment 2

Hundreds of children are exploited and trafficked in Georgia every year throughout the state. In 2016, the legislature voted to establish a dedicated state fund to help such children by providing intensive, early intervention services as they navigate the foster care system, education, and well-being.

Blue Ribbon for Change Initiative

In 2016, the legislature voted to establish a dedicated state fund to help such children by providing intensive, early intervention services as they navigate the foster care system, education, and well-being.

Safe Harbor Yes – Amendment 2

The Children's Mental Health Reform Council (CMHRC) was established under the provisions of HB 921. The CMHRC is an 11-member council made up of representatives from the state legislature, the governor's cabinet, state agencies, and the private sector. The council will report during the upcoming session.

Safe Harbor Yes

A key recommendation of this report is to create a Georgia Children's Mental Health Reform Council. Various state elected officials have raised the need for a Council in public settings and state agencies are closely evaluating the issues.

Where things stand as the 2017 session begins

The Georgia General Assembly convened on January 9, 2017, and welcomed Governor Deal to deliver his annual State of the State address on January 11. The governor's speech outlined many new initiatives and funding proposals supportive of education, health, and family and child well-being. Appropriations hearings occurred last week, revealing important details of the governor's budget proposals.

The legislature will return to session January 31. Our legislative update next week will offer a preview of key policy issues for the months ahead that will affect the work of Georgia's foundations.

In the meantime, here is an update on some policy developments since the conclusion of the last state legislative session.

State House Leadership

The governor's floor leaders will be Chuck Efstration, Trey Rhodes, and (returning) Terryemay. Renee Unterman will continue to chair Health and Human Services; Lindsey Tippins will chair Special Judiciary; Tyler Harper will chair Public Safety.

The governor has retained Butch Miller as a floor leader but also added P.K. Martin, IV and Larry Walker, III. Burt Jones will chair Insurance and Labor.

The governor’s floor leaders will be Chair Estel Barlow, Troy Rhodes, and (returning) Terry Rogers.

Mandla Ballinger will serve as chair of the Juvenile Justice Committee.

The governor has retained Ritch Miller as a floor leader but also added P.K. Martin, IV and Larry Walker, III. Burt Jones will chair Insurance and Labor.

The governor has retained Butch Miller as a floor leader but also added P.K. Martin, IV and Larry Walker, III. Burt Jones will chair Insurance and Labor.

The governor’s floor leaders will be Chair Estel Barlow, Troy Rhodes, and (returning) Terry Rogers.

Mandla Ballinger will serve as chair of the Juvenile Justice Committee.

The governor has retained Ritch Miller as a floor leader but also added P.K. Martin, IV and Larry Walker, III. Burt Jones will chair Insurance and Labor.

The governor has retained Butch Miller as a floor leader but also added P.K. Martin, IV and Larry Walker, III. Burt Jones will chair Insurance and Labor.

The governor’s floor leaders will be Chair Estel Barlow, Troy Rhodes, and (returning) Terry Rogers.

Mandla Ballinger will serve as chair of the Juvenile Justice Committee.

The governor has retained Ritch Miller as a floor leader but also added P.K. Martin, IV and Larry Walker, III. Burt Jones will chair Insurance and Labor.

The governor has retained Butch Miller as a floor leader but also added P.K. Martin, IV and Larry Walker, III. Burt Jones will chair Insurance and Labor.

The governor’s floor leaders will be Chair Estel Barlow, Troy Rhodes, and (returning) Terry Rogers.

Mandla Ballinger will serve as chair of the Juvenile Justice Committee.

The governor has retained Ritch Miller as a floor leader but also added P.K. Martin, IV and Larry Walker, III. Burt Jones will chair Insurance and Labor.

The governor has retained Butch Miller as a floor leader but also added P.K. Martin, IV and Larry Walker, III. Burt Jones will chair Insurance and Labor.