The 2018 legislative session has concluded. The FY 19 budget is on its way to the Governor. Deal has said.

**Gains for Students and K-12 Schools**

One of the biggest gains in the budget this year came in the form of a $167 million addition to the education K-12 line item. The $167 million is composed of $79 million for preschool programs, $59 million for charter school funding, $19 million for special education, and $10 million for the state's school readiness initiative.

**Supporting Foster Care**

Funds were included in the budget to bolster services provided to children who are victims of abuse and neglect. The budget includes $34 million for the Foster Parents' Allowance Program, which will increase the daily reimbursement rate for child placement agency foster parents by $10 per day. The budget also includes $1.2 million for the Children's Advocacy Centers, which will support child abuse prevention. As of December 2017, there were more than 14,000 children in foster care in Georgia. Also of note, there has been a 25 percent rise in children entering foster care in Georgia, from 6,400 in 2011 to 8,500 in 2015. As of April 12, 2018, there were 11,855 children in foster care in Georgia. Of those, 10,720 were placed in foster care by private agencies, and 1,135 were placed in public child-placing agencies. Other new funding included $3 million to assist in the treatment of foster children. Historically, foster parents that contract directly with the Department of Children, Youth, and Family Services (DCYFS) have been reimbursed at a rate below the actual costs of caring for foster children. This shortfall has created an incentive for foster parents to engage in foster care of children with high-needs. New funds will allow DCYFS to explore Medicaid reform options.

**Federally Qualified Health Centers**

Funds were allocated this session for services to support children under the age of 21 with autism. Those funds augment last year's $60 million investment. Children with high needs include those with cognitive and physical disabilities and complex health care needs. The $60 million gain allows Georgia to grow its existing services and fully fund its education residencies. Georgia's existing workforce shortage creates a need for more residency programs and training opportunities. Medical students are facing increased ongoing capacity for residency positions that require a higher daily stipend to better support the training of future health professionals.

**Health Care Reform**

Funds were added to address the maternal mortality rate in the country in 2016, with 39.3 deaths per 100,000 pregnancies. Funds were also added for the DeKalb County Health Care Reform Task Force. Namely, funds were allocated for the startup of the Georgia Apex Program, $368,000 for the establishment of the Georgia Alliance of Children's Mental Health Centers, $2.3 million for care coordinator positions to improve mental health outcomes for low-income students at high-risk, at-risk schools, and $1.5 million to support residency programs for the training of ob/gyns.

**Early Childhood and Maternal Health**

Funds were included in the maternal mortality line item. The FY 19 budget includes $4.5 million to support training of ob/gyns and the creation ofprimary care in Bryan County, and behavioral health services in Early and Emanuel counties. Currently there are 252 FQHCs in Georgia, operating in 117 counties. Also included in the maternal mortality line item is the addition of $661,000 for the cross-training of health department nurses to be able to perform pregnancy tests on request.

**Other Gains in Health Funding**

Funds were also included in the FY 19 budget for a proven approach to improving maternal and child health. The Georgia Apex Program includes an expansion of GCAL hours. The program also includes a mobile app that indicates the availability of mental health crisis services and suicide prevention resources. Currently, some schools and communities struggle to implement tele-health given the lack of equipment and lack of trained personnel. The Georgia Apex Program will address this lack of capacity, including an expansion of GCAL hours.

**Transportation**

Funds were included in the transportation line item in support of the Atlanta Region Transportation Study, which is a transportation plan for the Atlanta region. The plan was initiated in partnership with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA). The goal of the Atlanta Region Transportation Study is to develop a long-range transportation plan that addresses the needs of the region's residents and businesses. The plan will include recommendations for transportation investments, such as improvements to highways, transit systems, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

**Local Government**

Funds were also included in the local government line item. The FY 19 budget includes $481,000 for a technology pilot program to help local governments improve their efficiency and effectiveness in delivering services to residents. The program will provide local governments with tools and training to help them streamline their operations and improve the delivery of services to residents. The state will work closely with local governments to help them implement the pilot program and ensure its success.

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