



Why this Legislation is Important

Baby Boomers are here! We cannot turn a blind eye to the growing population shift in Georgia. The Georgia Council on Aging's *Project 2020: Georgia for a Lifetime Final Report* points out, "While the total population in Georgia is expected to grow by 46 percent between 2000 and 2030, the older adult population will grow by over 140 percent, the ninth highest increase in the nation. This change affects state and local budgets, development patterns, transportation spending, healthcare services, parks and recreation — almost every facet of community life. It offers Georgia, its cities and counties and the private sector tremendous opportunities and some potential challenges."

The recent reorganization of the Department of Human Resources left the Division of Aging Services in the Department of Human Services (DHS) as the only division that does not focus on children's services and as a Division with a unique privatized model of management. As a result, the needs and concerns of the burgeoning older adult population are often overshadowed, and the Division lacks the flat structure and organizational flexibility to access competitive resources so desperately needed by the state.

- By 2025 the number of Georgians over age 65 will increase 77%
- By 2030, one in four people in Georgia will be over the age of 55
- Four Georgia counties had a pre-senior population ranked in the top twenty nationally in terms of growth in a recent Brookings Institution report
- Older adults are or will soon be a major factor in every aspect of state government – continuing education to employment, public health to transportation, housing to long-term health care.
- Georgia communities in coastal and northern counties are consistently ranked as top retirement communities by national publications
- Georgia was ranked a disappointing 42nd in the nation in the *2011 State Long-Term Services and Supports Scorecard* funded by AARP, The Commonwealth Fund, and The Scan Foundation.

How are other states responding?

The state units on aging in many states report directly to the Governor rather than to a Commissioner or Department Director. Among them are our sister southern states Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

What this legislation would do:

Rather than expand state government, this legislation would create a Department of Aging which is smaller, more efficient, and more nimble in responding to needs and securing resources to improve services for Georgia's rapidly expanding aging population. A Department of Aging would be better able to obtain resources through federal and private sector grants while expanding opportunities for partnership with state departments, including Education, Labor, Transportation, and Public Health.

A Department of Aging would demonstrate Georgia's commitment to seniors, a vitally important market with over \$1.6 trillion in spending power and a net worth nearly twice the U.S. average.