



## BUDGET: 2023 Perineal Budget Issue

# **\$10 Million in Funding for Home and Community Based Services**

**The problem:** During the pandemic, requests for HCBS services dramatically surged. The rising costs of food and gas prices are stressors on services such as home-delivered meals and transportation programs. Seniors on fixed incomes are faced with increased costs of necessities such as food.

In-home services cost a fraction of the cost of a nursing home bed; Non-Medicaid in-home care averages \$2145 per person annually, far less than the cost of a nursing home bed.

**What this legislation would do:** The Georgia Council on Aging and CO-AGE members advocate for a \$10 Million increase in funding for Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS.) The Non-Medicaid Home and Community Based Services Program provides services that promote health and independence. HCBS programs consistently demonstrate in-home services help older Georgians stay in their homes and communities. On average, these services can help delay premature nursing home care by 51 months. In-home services include home delivered meals, adult day care, respite care, home modification and more. The longer a person is able to stay at home with supports, the more it saves taxpayer dollars.

The Georgia Council on Aging (GCOA) and the Coalition of Advocates for Georgia's Elderly (CO-AGE) recommends that HCBS funding be increased by \$10 Million. It would keep more older adults in their homes, maintain service provider jobs in local communities, and leverage public-private partnerships and solutions to the challenge of meeting the needs of an expanding older population.



## LEGISLATIVE: Long Term Care Services and Support

### **Improvements to Assisted Living Communities and Other Senior Living Options**

**The problem:** While Assisted Living Communities (ALCs) and large Personal Care Homes (PCHs) provide alternatives to nursing homes, many Georgians cannot afford private pay assisted living communities or large personal care homes. Because of this, a number of older adults with limited means, including those living in affordable housing, end up in nursing homes when generally all they need is assistance with daily living due to changes in health status. Such seniors need the home and community-based services provided under CCSP and SOURCE, but these programs are not available in assisted living or personal care homes of more than 24 beds.

**What other states are doing:** Currently 46 states and Washington, D.C. offer some Medicaid coverage for assisted living expenses.

**What this legislation would do:** A change in legislation would allow for older adults with limited means to have access to care provided in assisted living settings and larger personal care homes.

Specifically, legislation would: 1) amend Georgia's assisted living community statute to delete the prohibition of ALCs enrolling as a Medicaid provider and receiving Medicaid funds; and 2) add a section to the Georgia law on Community Care and Services for the Elderly to prohibit the availability of Medicaid funds from being restricted by state requirements that are more stringent than those under federal law or regulation. These changes will expand choice for older Georgians, allowing seniors to live in assisted living communities to take advantage of home and community-based services under Georgia's Elderly and Disabled Medicaid waiver, thus presenting another alternative to more expensive nursing home care.

#### **Any opposition:**

Community care services providers are concerned that allowing Medicaid in ALCs will strain funds available under the EDWP.

#### **Helpful Resources:**

LeadingAge Georgia and National, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, LTSS Center @ UMass Boston, American Council on Aging



## LEGISLATIVE: Long Term Care Services and Support

### **Telehealth for Dentistry; Teledentistry**

**The problem:** Teledentistry brings about efficiency, provides access to underserved populations, and improves quality of care to reduce the oral disease burden. Georgia has no rules or legislation to authorize GA supervising dentists to send or receive remote communication.

**What other states are doing:** California was a pioneer state in teledentistry. In 2010, Dr Paul Glassman created the Virtual Dental Home (VDH) to use telehealth technology in the delivery of oral healthcare to schools and long- term care facilities. Several states have used California's VDH model to launch their own teledentistry programs, including Oregon, Ohio, Arizona, Minnesota, Alaska, and Hawaii.

**What this legislation would do:** Legislation to establish Teledentistry under the umbrella of Telehealth will benefit those who have little to no access to oral care in rural areas as well as in remote settings (outside of the dental office), such as long-term care communities, hospitals, domestic violence shelters, community clinics, and the home bound. The establishment of Teledentistry will: 1) reduce costs through prevention and early intervention of dental diseases, 2) enable authorizing dentists to review x-rays and photos of the patient's issues or status, 3) further integrate medical-dental care, 4) shorten in-office or onsite dental appointments and 5) establish a virtual dental home in the community

**Any opposition:** SB 540 (Teledentistry) was dropped during the 2022 legislative session and did not pass before crossover day.

**Helpful Resources:** Dr. Paul Glassman, DDS, MA, MBA, Diana Allen; Primary Health Care Center, American, Dental Association, Georgia's Department of Public Health (DPH) Office of Telehealth & Telemedicine



## LEGISLATIVE: Caregiver Support

### **Work & Save Program**

**The problem:** Many Georgians, including working caregivers, do not have access to an employer provided retirement program.

**What other states are doing:** 17 other states have either passed legislation or are considering legislation to create these public-private partnerships for small businesses to offer their employees a retirement savings plan that is portable and no cost to the employer. California, Colorado, Maine, Virginia, Oregon, New Mexico, New York, Hawaii (just to name a few) have started these programs.

**What this legislation would do:** Legislation would create the state-run program for caregivers and working Georgians to have an opportunity to offer employees a benefit of a retirement savings.

**Any opposition:** The insurance industry has opposed this legislation in other states.

**Helpful Resources:** The Georgia Senate Retirement Study Committee final report from December 2021 included this work & save as its 1st recommendation.

[https://www.senate.ga.gov/committees/Documents/retirementsecurity\\_finalreport21.pdf](https://www.senate.ga.gov/committees/Documents/retirementsecurity_finalreport21.pdf)