



## **In-Session Newsletter**

### **March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023**

We are at Day 37 out of the 40-day Legislative Session. That leaves only 4 more working days until Sine Die (End of Session)! Things continue to move quickly under the gold dome. All bills must pass out of the full committee by end of day today to be considered for a floor vote in either chamber.

#### **UPDATE ON OUR LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

##### **Address Confidentiality**

Our [Address Confidentiality Bill](#) has a bill number! [SB324](#) Sen. Kim Jackson has secured signatures from Chairman Matt Brass (Chair of Senate Rules) and Sen. Mike Dugan (District 30-Carrollton and former Majority Leader), Sen. Harold Jones (District 22 – Augusta). The bill should drop tomorrow. This will give us time off-Session to work on the bill and build support.

##### **Funding**

Last night, Senate Appropriations published their budget recommendations. Unfortunately, it did not include additional monies for domestic violence shelters, nor did it include the \$2.5M for SANE nurses for sexual assault centers that the House appropriated in their budget. Because the numbers differ, they will go through a process of reconciliation. Final numbers will be provided soon. The good news is that in the House budget for SFY24 they included a \$5M increase to prosecuting attorneys' council to fund one victim advocate in each of Georgia's judicial circuits as well as one Director to oversee the program. The Senate's version included the same. This means that CJCC can redistribute those VOCA dollars that would have otherwise gone to Prosecuting Attorneys for victim advocates. Also, a reminder that the \$4M funding that was allocated to domestic violence shelters and sexual assault centers out of the Supplemental budget for SFY23 (breaks down to roughly \$60K for each shelter and sexual assault center) has to be obligated (not spent) by the end of the state fiscal year.

#### **UPDATE ON BILLS THAT ARE STILL MOVING**

[SB61](#) Family Care Act is soon to be permanent law! It passed the House 172-1 on March 20th and will soon be headed to Governor Kemp's Desk for his signature. This means that employees who already have earned sick time, can use that time to care for a sick family member.

[SB83](#), which is the bill that would revise the definition of stalking to include stalking that occurs in the home was heard yesterday in Judiciary Non-Civil Sub-Committee. Karimah Dillard and April Ross both testified in support of the bill. It was a "hearing only" so there was no vote on the bill. In order for the bill to get a House vote, it would need to pass first out of sub-committee and then out of the full Judiciary Non-Civil committee and then be put on the Rules calendar.



[SB131](#) is one that is on our radar because of its connection to child custody and domestic violence related fatalities. SB131 provides for judicial discretion in determining the rights of a surviving parent to the custody of a child when the surviving parent has been criminally charged with the murder or voluntary manslaughter of the other parent. This bill is sponsored by Chairman Blake Tillery and is being carried in the House by Rep Mandi Ballinger. This bill passed the House yesterday by substitute and is headed back to the Senate so they can vote on the substitute. Once it passes, the Senate (again) it will head to the Governor's desk for signature. Please take a moment to send Chairman Tillery and Chairman Ballinger a thank you for their work on this bill.

[HB404](#) is a housing protections bill that regulates the amount landlords can charge for a down payment; setting the cap at two times the rent. It also requires landlords to make repairs on most properties and says that a tenant upon signing a lease agreement has to attest that the dwelling is either habitable or inhabitable. Although this bill passed the House unanimously, it has not yet gotten a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

[SB132](#) would target immigrant and refugee communities by prohibiting property ownership for individuals from certain countries. This bill passed the Senate with a slim margin of victory on March 2nd and so far has not gotten a committee hearing in the House.

[SB12](#) draws a connection between gang activity and domestic violence, allows past acts of family violence to be entered into evidence during civil and criminal proceedings, and requires mandatory minimum sentencing for persons convicted of a second felony or act of family violence who were also in possession of a firearm. This bill had a hearing in Judiciary non-civil subcommittee and was debated yesterday and today. The committee chair decided that it was "hearing only" since the committee still had questions – specifically related to mandatory minimums and how broad "an act of family violence" is to the evidentiary code.

[SB264](#) Sen. Kim Jackson introduced a bill just before Crossover Day that would allow refugees and immigrants with special immigrant status to qualify for in-state tuition. This bill received a "hearing only" hearing in Higher Education committee. We will be following it next year.