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**GOVERNOR BRIAN P. KEMP**  
**2024 SESSION OF THE GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
**VETO MESSAGES**

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**VETO 1**

**House Bill 228** would expand Georgia Tuition Equalization Grant Program, HOPE Scholarship, and Dual Enrollment Program eligibility for certain private for-profit institutions. Despite each of these programs having finite resources, the General Assembly proposed many *ad hoc* pieces of legislation to expand institution eligibility without additional funding or fiscal analysis addressing the impact of such expansion on current appropriations. While I recognize the utility of tuition equalization grants for particular educational needs, the diversion of taxpayer funds to private institutions should only be sought on a measured and consistent basis.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 228.**

**VETO 2**

**House Bill 441** would create a statutory framework to regulate the practice of teledentistry in Georgia. The bill would also mandate that health insurers, including Georgia's State Health Benefit Plan and Medicaid care management organizations, provide coverage for teledentistry by January 1, 2024. Notwithstanding the date error, which mandates coverage for teledentistry before the bill would even take effect, the fiscal impact of this mandate was not analyzed or funded by the General Assembly. Adding teledentistry coverage without a full understanding of the fiscal impact risks financial harm to the State and affected employees. While I support expanding benefits to our state employees and access to dental services, I cannot do so without a clear understanding of the financial implications.

I appreciate that the growing practice of teledentistry in Georgia promotes expanded access to dental care, particularly for rural Georgians who may not have access to a local dentist. House Bill 441, however, may also inadvertently remove access to teledentistry services that are currently available, such as providing emergency advice to a patient. My hope is that we can continue to expand access to safe and affordable dental care through teledentistry, rather than limit its proven utility due to unintended legislative consequences. I look forward to working with the General Assembly next year to revisit this issue.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 441.**

### VETO 3

**House Bill 866** would create the Pike County Public Facilities Authority.

At the request of the sponsor, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 866.**

### VETO 4

**House Bill 956** would allow the Superior Court judges of the Conasauga Judicial Circuit to vote annually to select their chief judge for a one-year term.

At the request of the sponsor, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 956.**

### VETO 5

**House Bill 1019**, as originally introduced, would have raised the state-wide homestead tax exemption from \$2,000 to \$4,000 upon voter approval through a referendum. After the Senate Finance Committee changed the exemption amount, the Senate adopted a floor amendment late on the final day of the legislative session to return the bill to its original form. This amendment, however, did not change the language of the constitutionally required voter referendum, which references a \$10,000 exemption. Voters would therefore be approving a different exemption which the legislature did not pass, while the statutory language would never receive the voter approval needed for it to take effect. This conflict between the statutory language and the referendum language precludes implementation of House Bill 1019.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 1019.**

### VETO 6

**House Bill 1123** would establish an Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Multidisciplinary (“AANEM”) Coordinator Program within the Prosecuting Attorneys’ Council (“PAC”) to provide a network of regional coordinators. Upon such program being funded by the General Assembly, the district attorney of each judicial circuit would be required to establish an AANEM Team, which would be overseen and managed by one of multiple regional coordinators employed by PAC. This bill would also create an elder justice coalition for various purposes related to elder abuse response and prevention, including creating a law enforcement training for responding to instances of disabled adult and elder abuse to be implemented by the Georgia Public Safety and Training Center (“GPSTC”). The coalition would be operated by a PAC-employed state-wide coordinator.

Fiscal estimates show that the proposals in this bill would require annual funding of at least \$1,658,025 to PAC and \$520,354 to GPSTC. Despite these substantial costs, the General Assembly failed to fund both the AANEM Program and the elder justice coalition.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 1123.**

#### **VETO 7**

**House Bill 1192** would implement a two-year pause on the issuance of sales and use tax exemption certificates to high-technology data centers and data center customers. Only two years ago the legislature extended these tax exemptions for an additional three years, through 2031. The bill’s language would prevent the issuance of exemption certificates after an abrupt July 1, 2024 deadline for many customers of projects that are already in development—undermining the investments made by high-technology data center operators, customers, and other stakeholders in reliance on the recent extension, and inhibiting important infrastructure and job development.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 1192.**

#### **VETO 8**

**House Bill 1231** would expand Georgia Tuition Equalization Grant (“TEG”) Program, HOPE Scholarship, and Dual Enrollment Program eligibility for certain private, nonprofit institutions, allow HOPE Scholarship recipients to utilize unused credit hours to pursue a first professional degree, and remove the initial and first-year achievement standards of the HOPE Scholarship for former foster youths. None of these three proposals were accompanied by additional funding or fiscal analysis.

As addressed in my veto statement for House Bill 228, expansion of TEG, HOPE Scholarship, and Dual Enrollment eligibility should only be sought on a measured and consistent basis with a full understanding of the expansion’s financial impact on such programs.

Further, the Georgia Student Finance Commission estimates that there are approximately 108,000 unused HOPE credit hours and, if fully utilized by their recipients to pursue professional degrees, House Bill 1231 could impose a cost in excess of \$25,000,000 on HOPE funding.

I was proud to restore the promise made long ago to Georgia’s students by fully funding the HOPE Scholarship in 2023. To maintain that promise, and the financial

support upon which it stands, we must only consider expansion with a full understanding of the effect it will have on available funds.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 1231.**

#### **VETO 9**

**House Bill 1479** would allow the Probate Court of Ware County to impose a technology fee of up to \$5.00 on civil action filing fees and outstanding fines.

At the request of the sponsor, **I VETO HOUSE BILL 1479.**

#### **VETO 10**

**Senate Bill 198** would require the Department of Community Health's State Health Benefit Plan ("SHBP") pharmacy benefits manager(s) ("PBMs") to reimburse independent pharmacies filling plan member prescriptions in an amount not less than the average reimbursement provided to chain retail pharmacies for the same drug. The bill would also require compliance certification, records production, and cooperation from PBM(s). While I support independent pharmacies and the need for PBM transparency, fiscal estimates show the proposals in this bill would cost the Department between \$11,000,000 and \$45,000,000 per plan year and the General Assembly failed to fund this initiative.

Despite the lack of funding for this bill, the State's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget, House Bill 916, directs the Department to use existing funds for an actuarial study on SHBP independent pharmacy prescription drug reimbursements and PBM outpatient pharmacy benefit practices. House Bill 916 also provides SHBP one-time funding for a \$3.00 per prescription dispensing fee for independent pharmacists and provides funds to increase the dispensing fee to \$11.50 for independent low-volume pharmacies filling Medicaid prescriptions. These budget items provide an appropriate, fiscally sound approach to supporting independent pharmacists this year while obtaining necessary information to aid the Department in evaluating current and future management of the State's pharmacy plan and the General Assembly in examining PBM practices in future legislative sessions.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO SENATE BILL 198.**

#### **VETO 11**

**Senate Bill 203** would require the Technical College System of Georgia to offer tuition-free commercial driver's license ("CDL") training programs to veterans, subject to appropriations by the General Assembly. This proposal was previously

included in House Bill 249, which I vetoed on the grounds that the General Assembly failed to fund the initiative. The General Assembly also failed to fund Senate Bill 203 this year. I remain in steadfast support of our veterans and would encourage those wishing to pursue CDL training to seek out currently funded resources to cover tuition costs such as the Hope Career Grant.

For the foregoing reasons, **I VETO SENATE BILL 203.**

**VETO 12**

**Senate Bill 368** would prohibit foreign nationals from making political contributions, which is already prohibited by federal law, and impose additional state-level registration requirements on agents of foreign principals, some of which were unintended by the bill's sponsor.

At the request of the sponsor, **I VETO SENATE BILL 368.**

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