**GPHA Weekly Legislative Report**

For the week ending 2-27-15

By Scott Maxwell

**Hold Harmless**

There’s good news this week in that the FY 2016 Budget has passed out of the House of Representatives and headed to the Senate. It contains $1.39 million in hold harmless funding for county public health departments. Commissioner Brenda Fitzgerald testified before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Public Health regarding budget requests Friday morning and got no questions on hold harmless. I am less concerned about losing the hold harmless funds to Transportation than I was a few weeks ago. That said, the House took $60 million in Hepatitis C drugs out of the budget before sending it to the Senate. The Hep C money is a pet concern of Sen. Renee Unterman, so she may be looking for ways to put it back in. Of course, Sen. Unterman has always supported our hold harmless money as well. We will continue to monitor this important issue.

**Tobacco Tax**

I think the only hope for a cigarette tax increase of more than fifty cents per pack is for the Senate to decide to take a radically different approach from the House to the transportation-funding bill. The transportation bill has not yet made to the House floor. The Rules Committee sent it back to the Transportation Cmte for more work last week.

**Rural Hospital Stabilization**

The Governor’s Rural Hospital Stabilization Committee released its final report last week. It describes a “hub and spoke” approach to rural healthcare issues and requests $3 million to fund pilot projects with four “hub” hospitals. The report can be read in its entirety [here.](https://gov.georgia.gov/sites/gov.georgia.gov/files/related_files/document/Rural%20Hospital%20Stabilization%20Committee%20Report%20022315%20FINAL.pdf)

The following bills on our watch list saw action last week. Bad weather caused the postponment of a portion of the House debate calendar last Wednesday.

[HB 504, Vaccination of Meningococcal Disease of College Students](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20152016/HB/504) (Rep. Sharon Cooper-R)

Relating to meningococcal disease vaccinations and disclosures, so as to revise provisions regarding vaccination against meningococcal disease of college students. **Status:** Referred to Health & Human Services Cmte

[SB 51, Substitution of Drugs and Biological Products by Pharmacists](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20152016/SB/51) (Sen. Dean Burke-R)

Relating to pharmacists and pharmacies, so as to provide for substitutions of interchangeable biological products and drugs; to provide for requirements and limitations. **Status:** Referred to Health & Human Services Cmte, Passed Pharmacology Subcmte by Cmte Substitute, Referred to Full Cmte, Passed Cmte by Substitute, Passed Senate, Sent to House, Referred to Health & Human Services Cmte

[HB 325, Defining Term Motor Vehicle Regarding Safety Belts](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20152016/HB/325) (Rep. Bill Hitchens-R)

Relating to use of safety belts in passenger vehicles, so as to modify the definition of the term "passenger vehicle" to which the safety belt law applies. **Status:** Referred to Motor Vehicles Cmte, Passed Cmte by Substitute, Pending Rules Cmte, House Rules Calendar, House Postponed

[HB 362, Prescribing Albuteral Sulfate for Schools](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20152016/HB/362) (Rep. Valerie Clark-R)

Relating to pharmacists and pharmacies, so as to authorize licensed health practitioners to prescribe albuterol sulfate for schools.  **Status:** Referred to Health & Human Services, Passed Cmte by Substitute, Pending Rules Cmte, House Rules Calendar, House Postponed

[HB 426, Exemptions from Sales and Use Tax](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20152016/HB/426) (Rep. Darlene Taylor-R)

Relating to exemptions from sales and use tax, so as to provide a new exemption from state sales and use tax only for a limited period of time regarding the sale or use of tangible personal property to certain nonprofit health centers; to provide a new exemption for a limited period of time with respect to certain nonprofit volunteer health clinics. **Status:** Referred to Ways & Means Cmte

[HB 436, HIV and Syphilis Testing of Pregnant Women](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20152016/HB/436) (Rep. Valerie Clark-R)

Relating to control of venereal disease, so as to require that physicians and health care providers offer HIV and syphilis testing of pregnant women in their third trimester of pregnancy. **Status:** Referred to Health & Human Services, Passed Cmte, Pending Rules Cmte

[SB 34, Immunity if Rescuing Child in Motor Vehicle](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20152016/SB/34) (Sen. Greg Kirk-R)

Relating to general provisions relative to torts, so as to provide immunity from liability under certain circumstances for persons entering a parked motor vehicle for the purpose of removing a child from such motor vehicle. **Status:** Referred to Judiciary Cmte, Passed Cmte by Substitute, Pending Rules Cmte, Passed Senate by Substitute, Referred to Judiciary Cmte

[SB 53, Reauthorization of LPC’s for Certain Acts](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20152016/SB/53) (Sen. Greg Kirk-R)

Revise sunset provision to 2018 for LPC’s to perform certain acts. **Status:** Referred to Health & Human Services Cmte, Passed Cmte, Pending Rules Cmte, Tabled in Senate, Taken from Table, Passed Senate, Sent to House, Referred to Health & Human Services Cmte, Passed Cmte, Pending Rules Cmte, Passed House

[HB 394, Relating to Nursing](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20152016/HB/394) (Rep. Sharon Cooper-R)

Relating to nurses, so as to revise various provisions relating to the licensure of registered professional nurses and licensed practical nurses; to revise provisions relating to the powers and duties of the Georgia Board of Nursing; to provide for acceptance of nursing education programs located outside the United States; to provide for a time period for applicants who do not pass the licensing examination. **Status:** Referred to Health & Human Services Cmte, Passed Cmte, Pending Rules Cmte

[HB 501, Relating to a State-wide Health Care Data System](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20152016/HB/501) (Rep. David Stover-R)

Relating to health care data system established and departmental authority, so as to remove the authority of the Department of Community Health to use existing data collection systems in establishing and operating a state-wide health care data system. **Status:** Referred to Health & Human Services Cmte

[HB 504, Licensure and Regulation of Physical Therapists and Assistants](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20152016/HB/504) (Rep. Sharon Cooper-R)

Relating to physical therapists, so as to revise various provisions regarding the licensure and regulation of physical therapists and physical therapy assistants. **Status:** Referred to Health & Humans Services Cmte

[SB 143, Inclusion of Certain Trauma Centers in a Provider Network](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20152016/SB/143) (Sen. Chuck Hufstetler-R)

Relating to insurance generally, so as to require an insurer providing services under the state health benefit plan to include certain trauma centers in its provider network; to provide for a mechanism to resolve disputes between insurers and certain hospitals. **Status:** Referred to Insurance & Labor Cmte

[SB 158, Consumer and Provider Protections on Health Insurance](http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20152016/SB/158) (Sen. Dean Burke-R)

Relating to insurance, so as to provide certain consumer and provider protections regarding health insurance; to provide for health insurer transparency; to provide for health care providers' right to choose; to provide for health care provider stability. **Status:** Referred to Insurance & Labor Cmte