



# Public Policy for the People

Brought to you by  
the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities



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**\*\*Breaking news: New House Resolution to create an Employment First policy Joint Study Committee!!**

**\*\*The Georgia Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Consortium (GAIPSEC) thanks the Georgia General Assembly for its support of Inclusive Post-Secondary Programs in Georgia!**

**\*\*The rain didn't dampen the annual Disability Day crowd - dedicated advocates gathered for this annual event at its new location at Liberty Plaza across from the Capitol where Governor Deal addressed everyone (see Advocacy Corner section).**

## Insider Highlights

As you know, together with you, our grassroots advocates, we have been hard at work this session educating policymakers on the need for an Employment First Policy in Georgia. We are so excited to report that on Wednesday, March 11, 2015, **Georgia House Resolution 642**: Creating the Joint Study Committee on Postsecondary Education and Employment Options for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities was introduced by Representatives Dempsey of the 13th, Epps of the 144th, Harden of the 148th, Cooper of the 43rd, Oliver of the 82nd, and Rep. Terry England (to see the resolution in its entirety, see the **Bills** section). GCDD wishes to extend a very special THANK YOU to Rep. Katie Dempsey for her leadership on Employment First and this study committee. If these are your legislators, please contact them to thank them for their support of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education and Employment First (see **Advocacy of the Week** section).

[Employment First](#) means that employment should be the first and preferred option for all people, regardless of their disability. Under an Employment First policy, employment in the general workforce at or above minimum wage is the first and preferred option for all working age citizens with disabilities.

Also exciting to report: on Monday, March 9, the Georgia Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Consortium (GAIPSEC: [www.gaipsec.org](http://www.gaipsec.org)) along with students and staff from various inclusive post-secondary education (IPSE) programs in Georgia gathered at the Capitol to thank the Georgia General Assembly for its appropriations support in the Georgia state budget over the past two years. Senators Butch Miller of the 49th, Hill of the 4th, Millar of the 40th, Tippens of the 37th, Wilkinson of the 50th and Gooch of the 51st introduced **Senate Resolution 276** to commend the Georgia Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Consortium (GAIPSEC) for its work to create opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Georgia who have historically not had access to postsecondary education opportunities (to see the resolution in its entirety, see the **Bills** section). If these are your legislators, please contact them to thank them for their support of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education in Georgia (see **Advocacy of the Week** section). To see how these programs have grown in Georgia thanks to the legislative support, click [here](#).

GCDD also wishes to thank Rep. John Burns and Rep. Katie Dempsey for recognizing these students in the House through a morning order and for allowing the opportunity for GAIPSEC to thank the House for its support of IPSE programs in Georgia (see **Advocacy of the Week** section).

See photos below from Monday's IPSE thank you event and what some participants had to say:

### **East Georgia State College CHOICE program:**



From left to right: Dr. Donald Avery, EGSC VP Student Affairs; Tiffany Guthrie, EGSC CHOICE program student; Kasey Hayes, EGSC CHOICE program student; Theresa Davis, EGSC CHOICE Program Director; Sharaun Bright, EGSC CHOICE program student; Sen. Jack Hill; Sherrie Helms, EGSC Director of Student Conduct; Susanna Miller, GAIPSEC Statewide Coordinator, Center for Leadership in Disability; Dawn Alford, Acting Public Policy Director, Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities.

***"It was a wonderful opportunity to see just how the Senate and House of Representatives work to make things happen in Georgia"*** - Tiffany Guthrie, EGSC CHOICE program student

***"I am happy to have had the opportunity to personally thank the senators and representatives of Georgia for helping me have the opportunity to be a college student"*** - Sharaun Bright, EGSC CHOICE program student.

To learn more about East Georgia State College CHOICE program, click [here](#).

### **Kennesaw State University Academy for Inclusive Learning and Social Growth program:**



From left to right: (back row) Will Oglesby, Dr. Karla Wade, Katherine Rigsby, Chris Brown, Derek James, Haden Keen, Sen. Butch Miller, Eric Jacobson, Dr. Ibrahim Elsayy, Susanna Miller. (front row) Charlie Miller, Phillip Modisett, Natalie Gomez, Ava Cutler, Anna Mason, Tyler McDonald.

***"This day was an awesome day because I got to meet my Representative Jan Jones from Roswell. It was a once in a lifetime experience"*** - Ava Cutler, Kennesaw State University Academy for Inclusive Learning student.

To learn more about Kennesaw State University's Academy for Inclusive Learning, click [here](#).

### **Columbus State University GOALS program:**



From left to right: Amy Labus, Peer Mentor; Christy Odom, student; Shawna Johnson, student; Kimberly Fussell, Peer mentor.

To learn more about Columbus State University's GOAL program, click [here](#)

## **Advocacy of the Week**

We need YOU to get involved TODAY. Here are some things that you can do this week:

1. Please be sure to thank Representatives Dempsey of the 13th, Epps of the 144th, Harden of the 148th, Cooper of the 43rd, Oliver of the 82nd, and others for creating the Joint Study Committee in **HR 642** and for their support of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education and Employment First. Contact information for Georgia Representatives can be found alphabetically at the following website: <http://www.house.ga.gov/Representatives/en-US/HouseMembersList.aspx>
2. Please be sure to thank Senators Butch Miller of the 49th, Hill of the 4th, Millar of the 40th, Tippins of the 37th, Wilkinson of the 50th and others for introducing **SR 276**, and for their support of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Programs in Georgia. Contact information for Georgia Senators can be found alphabetically at the following website: <http://www.senate.ga.gov/SENATORS/en-US/SenateMembersList.aspx>
3. Don't forget to thank Rep. Jon Burns and Rep. Katie Dempsey for their morning order on Monday, March 9 on the House floor, which recognized the Georgia Inclusive Post-Secondary education programs in Georgia. Their contact information can be found here: <http://www.house.ga.gov/Representatives/en-US/HouseMembersList.aspx>
4. Mark your calendar to join us for the weekly GCDD Public Policy calls every Monday at 9:30 a.m. during the session. Dial 1-888-355-1249 and enter 232357 at the prompt.

## Advocacy Corner



Governor Deal addresses the crowd at the 2015 Disability Day.

On Thursday, March 5, GCDD held its annual Disability Day at the Capitol at its new location of Liberty Plaza. Though it was cold and rainy, the weather could not dampen the spirits of this dedicated bunch of advocates! As part of the day, an advocacy 101 training was held along with other events at the Freight Depot, after which, many advocates went to Capitol to advocate for more DD waivers and an ICWP rate increase with the Senate. Governor Deal was a featured speaker at the rally. To see photos from the rally and a copy of the Governor's speech, see below.

[Click Here to Download the Governor's Speech](#)



## Budget 101

This section of the newsletter highlights the activities and information regarding **Amended FY2015** (July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015) and **FY2016** (July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016) budgets.

**FY2016 Budget Update:** On Friday, February 27, several Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Hearings, including Human Development and Community Health Subcommittees, were held. Commissioner Frank Berry of DBHDD, Executive Eric Jacobson, of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, and other agencies presented their budgets to Chairman Unterman of the Human Development subcommittee, and answered question of the committee members. The Senate has been working behind the scenes on their budget recommendations and we anticipate learning the Senate's version of the FY 2016 budget next week. We hope that the Senate will KEEP what the House put in and hopefully ADD more dollars to the budget for the Unlock ASKS for ICWP and NOW/COMP. Stay tuned for updates.

**What the House put in the DCH budget (line 87.12):  
Increase funds to provide a \$0.50 per hour rate increase for Personal Support Services covered under the Independent Care Waiver Program (ICWP) - \$1,329,428.**

**What the House up in the DBHDD House Budget (line 55.8):  
Increase funds for 75 additional slots for New Options Waiver (NOW) and Comprehensive Supports Waiver Program (COMP) - \$1,124,226.**

To see the Senate budget documents for the FY 2016 budget, click on the link below. The key sections of the budget most relevant to people with disabilities are:

Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities  
Department of Community Health  
Department of Human Services

<http://www.senate.ga.gov/sbeo/en-US/AppropriationsDocuments.aspx>

Check out the Unlock website for the most current budget information.

<http://unlockthewaitinglists.com/>

## Bills

### 2015 Georgia Legislative Bills

This section will present a list of bills that GCDD is tracking by clicking on the link to the GCDD Legislative Report below. Please note the information within this section is current as of Wednesday, March 11, 2015 (cutoff for publishing). Today, Friday, March 13, is legislative day 30, otherwise known as crossover day. General bills and constitutional amendment resolutions that do not pass their chamber of origin by the 30th legislative day become inactive until this legislative session resumes in 2016.

Note that in the legislative report below, both the House and Senate bills will be listed by Bill Number, Sponsor, Title Summary, and the most current activity followed by Comments and Summary of the Bill. **Please note that the second line of each bill will reflect the date of the most recent action and what action was taken on this bill.**

You can also click on the bill number within the report to link to the actual bill language itself and get even more detailed information.

[GCDD Legislative Report](#)

### **Bill and Resolution Highlights**

**SR 276:** GCDD thanks Senator Butch Miller and all his cosponsors for Senate Resolution 276, which was read to the Senate on Monday, March 9, 2015. SR 276 commends the Georgia Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Consortium (GAIPSEC) for its work to create opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Georgia who have historically not had access to postsecondary education opportunities. Be sure to thank Senator Miller and his cosponsors for this resolution and for the opportunity to thank the Senate for its support of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education programs in Georgia!!

To read the entire Senate resolution, click [here](#).

**HR 642:** GCDD also wishes to thank Rep. Katie Dempsey and all her cosponsors for HR 642 to create a Joint Study Committee on Postsecondary Education and Employment options for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. This is an exciting opportunity to study the benefits of what [Employment First Policy](#) would mean to Georgians with disabilities! Be sure to thank Rep. Dempsey and her cosponsors for this joint study committee today!!

To read the entire House resolution, click [here](#).

For more information about the process a bill must take to become law in Georgia, click on the link below.

[Tracking a Bill through the General Assembly](#)

For more information about how a bill is passed in the Georgia Legislature, click below:

<http://www.senate.ga.gov/sos/Documents/habbal.pdf>

## Dates to Remember

The latest adjournment resolution set the legislative schedule for the rest of this session. To see it, click [here](#).

**Weekly GCDD Legislative call:** Every Monday at 9:30 a.m. Dial 1-888-355-1249 and enter passcode 232357 at the prompt.

**DD Advisory Council Meeting:** Friday, March 20, 9:30am-2:30pm; location TBA

**Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Board Meeting:** April 23  
<http://dbhdd.georgia.gov/2015-dbhdd-board-meetings>

## Resources/Quick Links

[Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities 2015 Legislative Agenda](#)

For more One Pagers for Advocates, click below:

<http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com/actionsalerts.html>

[Golden Rules of Legislative Visits](#)

[Webinar - Tips on How to Talk to Your Legislator](#)

[Accessibility on Capitol Hill](#)

[House committee meeting calendar](#)

[Senate committee meeting calendar](#)

[Watch the Session Live!](#)

[Find Your Senator and Representative](#)

**Thank you from the GCDD Public Policy Team**

**Dawn Alford: Acting Public Policy Director**

**D'Arcy Robb: Public Policy Contractor - Employment First**

**Nick Perry: Public Policy Intern**

[\*\*Join our Advocacy Network Today!\*\*](#)



*THE STATE'S LEADER IN ADVANCING PUBLIC POLICY  
ON BEHALF OF PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.*

