



Georgia Academy of Family Physicians 2026 Session Overview

Overview

The 2026 legislative session of the Georgia General Assembly was marked by a continued focus on incremental healthcare reforms, targeted investments in workforce and rural health, and increased attention to regulatory oversight. While comprehensive reforms such as Medicaid expansion did not advance, lawmakers prioritized politically viable measures aimed at improving access, affordability, and system accountability.

Georgia Political & Election Landscape (2026 Update)

Georgia remains one of the most competitive political battlegrounds in the country heading into the November 2026 elections. With all legislative seats, multiple statewide offices, and key federal races on the ballot, the state continues to play a central role in shaping both state and national policy direction.

Competitive Environment & Turnout Trends

- Strong voter participation in the 2026 primaries signals high engagement heading into the general election
- Georgia continues to function as a true swing state, with outcomes often decided by narrow margins
- Suburban and rural turnout dynamics will be critical in determining election outcomes

Key Races & Political Dynamics

- The U.S. Senate race is expected to be one of the most competitive in the nation
- Statewide offices, including constitutional positions, are also highly contested
- Legislative control remains a key focus, with both parties investing heavily in down-ballot races

Intra-Party Dynamics

- Republican primaries have highlighted divisions between traditional conservatives and more populist factions

- Democrats are emphasizing healthcare access, affordability, and economic issues to mobilize voters

Election Policy & Administration

- Continued debate around election integrity, voting systems, and ballot processes
- Legislative discussions may influence future election administration policies

Implications for Healthcare Policy

- A competitive political environment reinforces a trend toward incremental, consensus-driven healthcare policy
- Rural health, workforce shortages, and affordability remain bipartisan priorities
- Broader reforms, including Medicaid expansion, continue to face political headwinds
- Election outcomes may significantly influence:
 - Healthcare funding levels
 - Scope of practice policy
 - Insurance and regulatory frameworks

Blue-Ribbon Study Committee Update

The Blue-Ribbon Study Committee on Local Government Taxation, Funding, and Budgeting has been established to evaluate Georgia's local funding mechanisms. The committee's charge includes:

- Strengthening transparency in local government finance
- Ensuring fairness for taxpayers
- Increasing fiscal accountability across local jurisdictions

While not healthcare-specific, the committee's findings may have downstream implications for public health funding, local healthcare infrastructure, and county-level service delivery.

Key Healthcare Legislation

Access & Delivery of Care

- **SB 220:** Passed and expands Georgia's medical cannabis program, broadening qualifying conditions and modernizing delivery methods

-Status: Signed by Governor

-Link: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/70559>

- **HB 1114:** Advances maternal health oversight and coordination to improve outcomes statewide

-Status: Signed by Governor

-Link: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/69428>

- **HB 1393:** Allows rural hospitals to collaborate for purchasing power while maintaining independence; includes CON reform and limited antitrust protections

-Status: Did not pass - Senate Tabled

-Link: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/73431>

- **SB 427:** Creates pathways for foreign-trained physicians to obtain licensure, addressing workforce shortages

-Status: Signed by Governor

-Link: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/72469>

- **HB 961:** Expands protections against surprise billing for ground ambulance services

-Status: Did not pass

-Link: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/72210>

- **HB 1238:** Provides Medicaid-funded respite care for families of children with behavioral health needs

-House Agree Senate Amend or Sub As Amended

-Link: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/72959>

Behavioral Health & Public Health

- **SB 428:** Expands Medicaid reimbursement for home-based mental health services

-Status: Signed by Governor

-Link: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/70277>

- **HB 717:** Establishes a regulatory framework for ketamine clinics

-Status: Signed by Governor

-Link: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/71103>

- **HB 291:** Creates certification for community health workers

-Status: Did not pass

-Link: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/69959>

- **HB 334:** Establishes the Sickle Cell Disease Protection Act

-Status: Signed by Governor

-Link: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/70064>

- **HB 350:** Expands safe haven protections for newborns

-Status: Signed by Governor

-Link: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/70112>

Insurance & Consumer Protection

- **HB 1262:** Strengthens oversight of insurers and enforces mental health parity and surprise billing protections

-Status: Dis not pass

-Link: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/73055>

- **SB 444:** Prohibits insurance coverage decisions based solely on artificial intelligence

-Status: Signed by Governor

-Link: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/72666>

- **HB 1192:** Enhances financial accountability for state agencies, including health agencies

-Status: Vetoed

-Link: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/72841>

Scope of Practice & Physician-Led Care

Significant advocacy efforts successfully defeated multiple scope of practice expansion bills, including:

- **HB 1088** (chiropractic terminology expansion)
- **HB 1150** (expanded prescribing authority for mid-level providers)
- **HB 981** (expanded prescriptive authority for NPs/APRNs)

These outcomes preserved the physician-led team model of care, a key priority for GAFFP.

Budget & Funding Priorities

The FY 2027 state budget reflects continued investment in healthcare priorities:

- Expanded funding for rural healthcare providers
- Increased support for behavioral health services and infrastructure
- Workforce development initiatives to address provider shortages
- Implementation of the GREAT Health Program (\$218.8 million) to strengthen rural systems

Budget negotiations remained central throughout the session, particularly as lawmakers prepared for reduced federal healthcare funding support.

Emerging Policy Areas

Healthcare Workforce

- Expanded loan repayment eligibility for providers in underserved areas
- Licensure pathways for internationally trained physicians
- Continued focus on workforce shortages, especially in rural Georgia

Technology & Innovation

- Increased scrutiny on AI in healthcare decision-making (SB 444)
- Growth in regulation of emerging treatment models such as ketamine clinics

Public Health & Prevention

- Cardiovascular screenings for student athletes
- Autism screening pilot programs
- Opioid overdose reversal requirements on college campuses

GAFP Advocacy & Engagement

GAFP members remained highly engaged throughout the session:

- Participated in Family Physician Day at the Capitol, meeting with legislators and agency leadership
- Engaged directly with key policymakers and healthcare stakeholders
- Collaborated with physician groups to advocate for patient-centered policies
- Successfully protected physician-led care through targeted advocacy efforts

Session Themes & Takeaways

- **Incremental Progress Over Broad Reform**
Major structural reforms such as Medicaid expansion did not advance, while targeted policies moved forward
- **Strong Focus on Rural Health & Workforce**
Legislative and budget priorities reflect ongoing concern over provider shortages and access gaps
- **Increased Regulatory Oversight**
Lawmakers emphasized insurance accountability, AI oversight, and healthcare system transparency

- **End-of-Session Volatility (Sine Die)**
Final legislative decisions occurred rapidly, with significant behind-the-scenes negotiations shaping outcomes
- **Election-Year Policy Dynamics**
The 2026 election cycle is reinforcing cautious policymaking, with emphasis on broadly supported healthcare initiatives

Looking Ahead

After the General Assembly adjourned, several key issues remain unresolved and are expected to carry into future sessions:

- Medicaid expansion and broader coverage reform
- Continued scope of practice debates
- Long-term funding sustainability for rural healthcare systems
- Implementation and oversight of newly passed healthcare regulations
- Potential policy shifts following the 2026 election outcomes

GAFP and its advocacy partners will remain actively engaged in monitoring rulemaking, budget implementation, and interim committee activity ahead of the 2027 legislative session.