



**Georgia Bio Legislative Watch**  
**Week: January 30, 2015**  
**Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP**

This week marks the third week of the 2015 Legislative Session. With momentum building, the House passed their FY 2015 Amended Budget and the Senate passed their first bill relating to Autism insurance coverage. Here are the highlights:

**FY15 Amended Budget:** The House passed out its version of the FY 2015 Amended Budget on Thursday. The House made no significant changes to the legislation, but one section has been a hot topic of conversation. Under the Department of Community Health Governor Deal proposed that the Department submit a study to him and the General Assembly by June 30, 2015 which examines why SHBP's costs are higher than other comparable government employee health plans and outline a variety of options for reducing those costs without further diminishing the value of health benefits received by the plan's members. However, the House altered this language to read: "Yes; Submit a study to the Governor and General Assembly by June 30, 2015 that examines why SHBP's costs are higher than other comparable government employee health plans and describe a variety of options for reducing costs without further diminishing the value of health benefits received by members. The General Assembly also finds that non-certificated school employees are an essential part of the education delivery system and directs that any such report include an examination of options to provide health benefits to these workers."

**Autism:** Committee Substitute (LC 37 1876S) to SB 1 was passed on the Senate floor on Thursday of this week. SB 1 amends Georgia's current law on health insurance coverage for autism as found at O.C.G.A. § 33-24-59.10 and will require habilitative or rehabilitative services; counseling services; and therapy services to an individual covered by a policy or contract who is six years of age or under (once a determination is made that the treatment is "medically necessary health care." The proposal does contain a coverage limit for applied behavior analysis of \$35,000 per year. The bill now moves to the House for further review.

**Medical Marijuana:** Rep. Allen Peake (R – Macon) proposes an amendment to O.C.G.A. Chapter 34-43 to encourage the use of medical marijuana for specified treatment conditions. It is titled "Haleigh's Hope Act" for 2015. The discussion around this proposal has been to add epilepsy to the set of conditions, such as glaucoma and cancer, for which medical marijuana in liquid, pill or injection form may be used. The initial version of the bill is stated in the form of legislative intent to permit use of cannabis of controlled strength to qualified patients. The bill prohibits recreational use of cannabis. The mechanisms for regulation of use are not yet detailed in the bill and appear to be left to the Composite Board of Medical Examiners in whose title of the Code the bill is placed. The bill will be heard in the House Judiciary Non-Civil Committee on Tuesday of next week at 2:00 in room 606 CLOB.

**Georgia Bio Day at the Capitol:** We had a very successful day at the Capitol on Wednesday of this week. After a legislative briefing and advocacy training breakfast, members took to the halls and pulled legislators off of the floor, discussing various topics such as our Biosimilars bill as well as other various industry issues, including education and economic development initiatives. A panel was held in the afternoon on the topic of Georgia's Industry Response to Ebola. We finished

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off the day with a very successful presentation to the Joint Health and Human Services Committee relating to Biosimilars. Two Resolutions were also introduced recognizing Georgia Bio and their Day at the Capitol.

The General Assembly is in recess until Monday, January 26<sup>th</sup> for legislative day 9. The House will convene at 1:00 and the Senate at 10:00.