

2022 SESSION: PUBLIC SAFETY BUDGET AND LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

The General Assembly continues to support law enforcement by providing additional funding for public safety and supporting policies that make the profession more attractive and beneficial. Budget Highlights:

- The General Assembly appropriates nearly \$16 million in the FY 2023 budget (HB 911) to fund an additional salary increase of \$2,000 for state correctional officers and juvenile correctional officers above the \$5,000 cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) provided to all state employees; nearly \$4.3 million is provided for correctional officer salary adjustments at private prisons to maintain pay competitive with state prisons.
- The budget for the Department of Corrections also includes \$4.2 million to annualize the costs associated with establishing regional hubs for offender transport; \$10 million for technological improvements designed to improve correctional officer safety; and \$42.4 million for capital maintenance and repairs at facilities throughout the state. A combined \$600 million is provided to the Georgia Building Authority (GBA) in the Amended FY 2022 budget and the FY 2023 bond package for a state prison facility transformation project. This project entails purchasing an existing prison facility and constructing a new one to save operating expenses and provide a safer environment for correctional officers and inmates.
- As part of the House of Representatives' law enforcement initiative, HB 911 includes \$15.5 million for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) to hire 68 new positions to combat crime and support the criminal justice system through the processing of evidence. Specifically, the budget includes: \$3.8 million for 21 scientists and seven crime lab technicians, \$800,000 to outsource chemistry and firearms cases, and \$170,000 to outsource training to address the current crime lab backlog; \$2.1 million for 10 new positions in the medical examiner's office to address workload including three medical examiners, six death investigator specialists (DIS), and one administrative assistant; \$975,000 for an additional medical examiner and three death investigator specialists (DIS) in the Macon office; \$4.6 million for 15 special agents, six criminal intelligence analysts, and one help desk analyst and necessary operating expenses for the Gang Task Force; and \$579,936 to annualize four positions to investigate elections complaints. The budget also includes \$2.6 million for an additional salary increase for death investigator specialists and crime lab scientists to increase retention.
- House Bill 911 includes \$976,918 to fund 10 SWAT Unit troopers in the Department of Public Safety, as well as \$577,480 for a 10% salary increase for Troop C officers to combat crime in the metro Atlanta area. The General Assembly provides the department with \$750,000 for fuel

expense to maintain patrol hours during times of record-high gasoline prices and \$2.6 million to fund a 75-cadet trooper school

- The Georgia Public Safety Training Center receives \$1.1 million in HB 911 for 10 proper use of force and de-escalation training positions; \$379,500 is budgeted for the Office of Public Safety Officer Support for two additional peer counselors and one social worker along with the necessary operating expenses to enhance public safety officers' access to peer counselors and health clinicians.
- The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities receives \$2.2 million for assisted outpatient treatment (AOT); \$897,060 to expand the co-responder mobile crisis team to 10 new sites; \$220,050 to establish a technical assistance coordination center for mental health accountability courts; and \$281,995 for five additional caseworkers to support new accountability courts.
- The FY 2023 budget includes \$1.7 million as part of an increased focus on law enforcement to create a service cancelable loan program for active state and local law enforcement officers, as well as medical examiners employed by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI). Eligible officers receive \$2,000 per year, for a maximum of four years, and are eligible for one year of loan forgiveness for each year of service. As part of an overall strategy to recruit and retain medical examiners at the GBI, medical examiners are eligible for \$20,000 of loan forgiveness per year of service, up to \$120,000. Legislative Highlights:
 - HR 1082 (Rep. Mike Cheokas, 138th) creates the House Study Committee on State and Local Law Enforcement Salaries.
 - SB 319 (Sen. Jason Anavitarte, 31st) repeals the requirement for a weapons carry license for those who are not otherwise ineligible to possess and carry a firearm.
 - SB 358 (Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick, 32nd) authorizes the Georgia Public Safety Training Center to use funds to reimburse or provide for certain costs incurred in training active duty, retired, or honorably discharged members of the United States armed forces who are attending basic law enforcement training to the extent that funds are appropriated by the General Assembly. Eligible costs are limited exclusively to the cost of tuition that is incurred in connection with such training if the costs are not covered by any other resource available to the service member.
 - SB 361 (Sen. Larry Walker III, 20th) establishes a tax credit for contributions to "501(c)(3) law enforcement foundations", which are defined as being any domestic non-profit corporation with the sole function of supporting one local law enforcement unit through a formal relationship with such local law enforcement unit. Taxpayers are allowed a 100% income tax credit for qualified donations to law enforcement foundations provided that a single individual or head of household shall not be allowed a credit of more than \$5,000; a married couple, individual who is a member of a limited liability company, a shareholder of a Subchapter 'S'

corporation, or a partner in a partnership shall not be allowed a credit of more than \$10,000; and a corporation shall not be allowed a credit of more than 75% of the corporation's income tax liability. This tax credit has an annual aggregate cap of \$75 million and a per law enforcement foundation cap of \$3 million per year. Qualified expenditures by the law enforcement foundations include bonus payments or training of law enforcement officers; purchase, lease, maintenance, or improvement of equipment to be used by law enforcement officers; or costs incurred by the local law enforcement unit for the operation of an emergency response team that combines law enforcement officers and behavioral health specialists

- SB 403, the 'Georgia Behavioral Health and Peace Officer Co-Responder Act', requires each community service board (CSB) to establish a co-responder program to work with local law enforcement agencies responding to emergency calls involving people in a behavioral health crisis.
- SB 505 (Sen. Randy Robertson, 29th) requires 9-1-1 communications officers to receive training in the delivery of high-quality telephone cardiopulmonary resuscitation in addition to basic training. On and after July 1, 2024, no person will be certified by the council without satisfying this requirement. By January 1, 2024 and in coordination with the Georgia Emergency Communications Authority, the council must establish an amount of continuing education units to be completed annually by communications officers.

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