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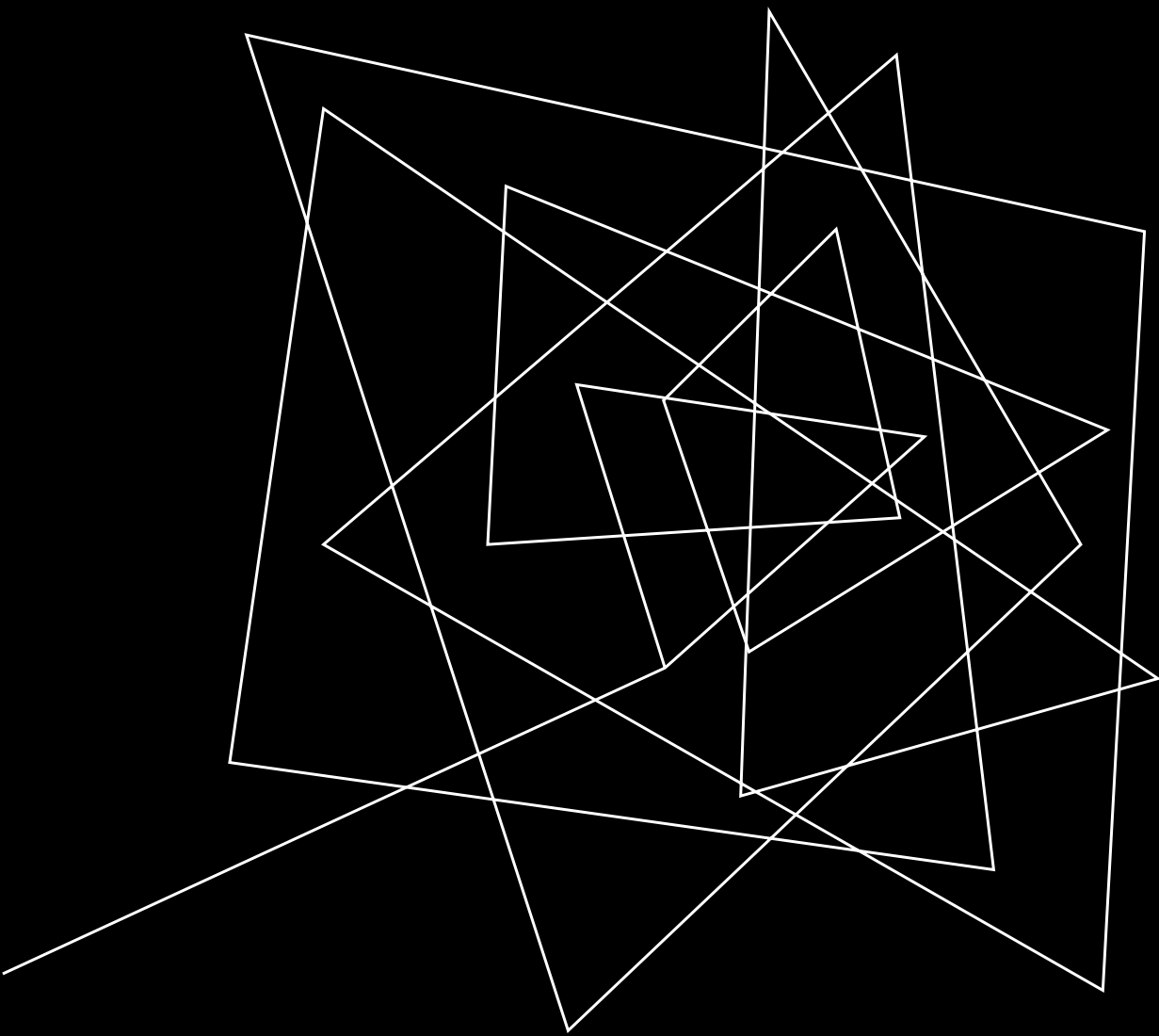
**2025 GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**DAY 31 UPDATE ON HOUSING AND  
HOMELESSNESS POLICY PRIORITIES**

MARCH 13, 2025

# DAY 31 OF 40-DAY SESSION: POST CROSSOVER REPORT

- 2025 is the first year of a two-year term. Bills that do not pass this year remain available for passage in 2026.
- March 6 was Crossover Day
  - More than 110 bills on affordable housing, homelessness, tenant's rights were introduced. Vast majority positive.
  - Only a handful were heard and passed out of committee, both good and bad.
  - Fewer than 10 remain alive after crossover.
  - Bills that did not cross over can be amended onto other bills.
  - Bills that came out of committee but did not reach the House or Senate floor are recommitted to their committee of origin.
- Sine Die is April 4, the end of the session.



PREVENT AND  
AMELIORATE  
HOMELESSNESS

# OPPOSE CRIMINALIZATION OF HOMELESSNESS

## Oppose Criminalizing Homelessness

- Support best practices for criminal diversion, jail in-reach, re-entry supports, and increase in supportive housing, with wraparound services.
- **Support SB 170** Creates Interagency Council for the Homeless of all state agencies: DCA, DBHDD, DOC, Veterans, DFCS, etc. to develop strategy and resources to address homelessness. *Passed Senate.*
- **Support SB 233** Continues Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Commission (with Homeless Work Group). *Passed Senate.*
- **Support HR 207** House Study Committee on Eradication of Homelessness. *Alive.*

## Oppose HB 295 Criminalize Homeless

- Creates private lawsuits against cities and counties to recover property taxes for a pattern of failing to enforce criminal laws against unsheltered homeless people for street sleeping, obstructing sidewalk, loitering, panhandling, etc.
- *Passed out of Committee. Held in Rules. Can surface as an amendment or in 2026.*
- Cicero Action again seeking criminal sanctions to force people into parking lot encampments.
- 99+ Georgia jurisdictions with homeless criminal laws on the books.

# SUPPORT HOUSING TO PREVENT AND REMEDY HOMELESSNESS

## Housing and Foster Care

- **Keep families together with funding to address housing inadequacy.**  
20% of children removed to foster care each year is due to housing inadequacy. Georgia not using available federal Family Unification (FUP) Vouchers and not investing state funds to address housing inadequacy.
- **Address high rate of youth leaving foster care becoming homeless with federal Fostering Youth Independence (FYI) vouchers.**

## Opportunities for Progress

- **Support SR 310** Senate Study Committee on Additional Services and Resources for Transition Age Youth in Foster Care. *Alive.*
- **DCA and DFCS have entered into an MOU** to increase usage of federal vouchers to prevent children being removed to foster care due to housing and to increase use of vouchers for youth aging out of foster care.

# INCREASE NEEDED FUNDING TO HOUSE THE HOMELESS

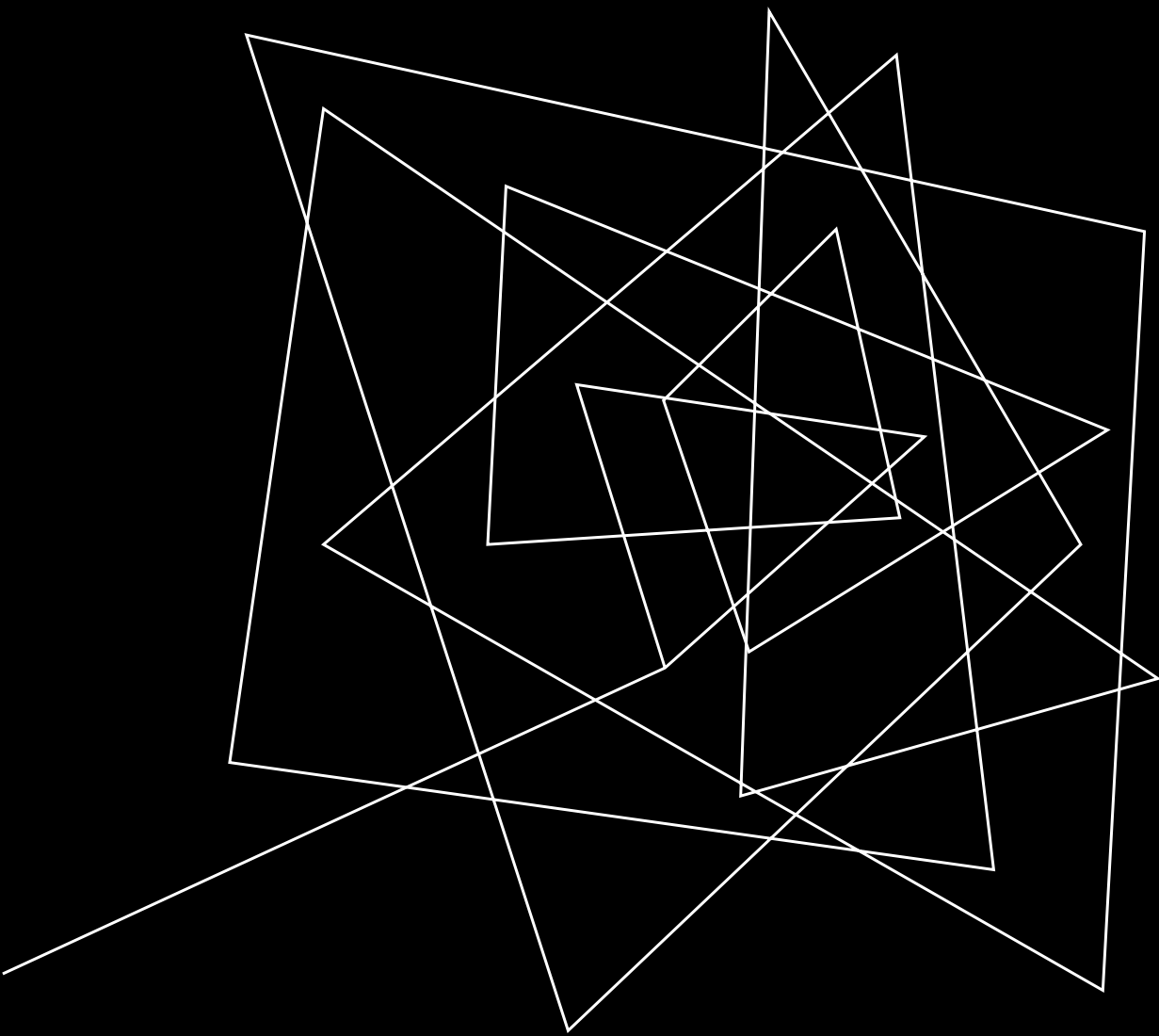
## Need for funding

- Homelessness increased in Georgia by 13% last year with sharpest increase among the unsheltered (now over 50%). 79% increase in homelessness since 2017.
- Failing to house is more expensive than housing – police, courts, jail, prison, ERs, hospitals, etc.

## Georgia is Not Meeting its Legal Obligations

**Georgia Housing Voucher Program** provides housing vouchers and wraparound services under the 2010 *Olmstead* Settlement Agreement with the US Department of Justice. **\$20 Million per year add needed.**

- Settlement obligates Georgia to house people in target population of 9,000 chronically homeless people with severe and persistent mental illness cycling through the criminal justice system, hospitals and ERs.
- Now serving 2,159 people. Costs and demand increased dramatically in recent years creating need for more \$\$.
- No increase appropriated in 2024. Now people being diverted from the GHVP to seek federal Housing Choice Vouchers – a strategy abandoned two years ago as inconsistent with serving people under the Agreement.



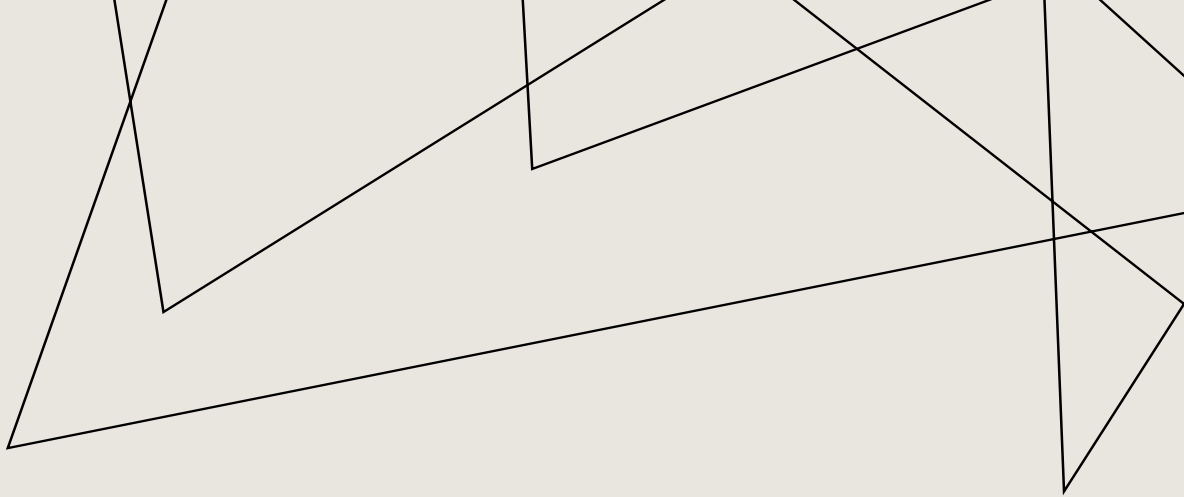
STANDING UP FOR  
TENANTS' RIGHTS

# HB 689: CREATES A HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION PROGRAM THROUGH FLEXIBLE LOCAL GRANTS FOR EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE

- Bipartisan legislation introduced by Rep. Kasey Carpenter (R-Dalton) with 30+ organizations supporting.
- Passed House State Planning and Community Affairs Committee unanimously.
- Did not receive a floor vote before crossover. Available for amendment or passage in 2026.
- Proposes flexible local grants to prevent homelessness, support housing stability among low-income persons, and avoid evictions.
- Applicants may include cities, counties, non-profits, legal services agencies, eviction diversion programs, coalitions providing a unified portal for emergency rental and related assistance, etc.
- Goal to create a permanent state funded program for short term emergency rental assistance, combined with legal assistance and eviction diversion resources.



# CONTINUE THE EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE/EVICTION DIVERSION PROGRAM WITH \$25 MILLION IN STATE FUNDS



## ARPA Funded Pilot Eviction Prevention Program

- Georgia received \$1.3 Billion in federal covid Emergency Rental Assistance funds. Final \$55 Million used to create two-year pilot Eviction Prevention Initiative. Funds end September 2025.
- Contracts with Atlanta Legal Aid Society and Georgia Legal Services Program:
  - Navigators hired to qualify eligibility for rental assistance.
  - Legal representation in eviction.
  - \$2 Million/month in rental assistance.

## DCA Recognizes the Need for a Permanent State Funded Eviction Prevention Initiative

- State funding is needed to continue the pilot program and afford access to emergency rental assistance and legal representation to keep families stably housed.
- State funding can also attract federal resources and philanthropy.

# Implications of Ending GRA-EPI Program Funding

- **Housing Instability & Homelessness:** Increased evictions would force more individuals and families into homelessness, straining shelters and social services. Vulnerable populations, including low-income families, seniors, and disabled individuals, would be disproportionately affected.
- **Economic & Financial Consequences:** Landlords, especially small property owners, would face financial losses due to unpaid rent and increased turnover costs. The broader economy would suffer as displaced tenants redirect spending from essential goods and services to urgent housing needs.
- **Strain on Public Services & Legal System:** Higher eviction rates would overload courts with cases and delay legal proceedings. Public assistance programs, shelters, and non-profits would see increased demand, stretching limited resources.
- **Public Health & Social Disruptions:** Overcrowding in shelters or unstable housing situations would heighten public health risks. Disruptions in employment and education could further hinder long-term economic mobility for affected families.
- **Rental Market Volatility:** The instability caused by mass evictions could lead to fluctuating rental prices, increased vacancy rates, and declining neighborhood stability and negatively impact the housing market.

# SEEK TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO ENFORCE RENTERS' SAFETY AND HABITABILITY

- Georgia is targeted by out of state hedge funds and Real Estate Investment Trusts to purchase single and multi-family homes and convert them to rentals in part because of the absence of basic tenant protections. They seek fast profit and turnover and are shown to be more likely to raise rents, initiate evictions, engage in serial eviction filings, and fail to be accountable to tenants for security and repair needs than other landlords.
- Shell corporations and complicated ownership structures make it difficult or impossible for tenants, code enforcement, or local governments to identify and hold landlords accountable.
- **HB 555 that proposed to cap single family home ownership at 2,000 units, and to cap multifamily home ownership passed out of Committee but *stalled without a floor vote. New effort in 2026.***
- Georgia law now prohibits local governments from adopting rental registries. Registries can identify who is holding rental property, where they are, who is responsible for the premises, how they can be contacted, etc. Rental registries are a key to holding landlords accountable and provide transparency about ownership. **HB 374 proposed to provide a limited rental registry option by narrowing the pre-emption of rental registries in OCGA §36-74-30 and allow local jurisdictions to act to provide some transparency and accountability. *It was drastically narrowed in committee and stalled. New effort in 2026.***
- **HB 399 requires a licensed broker and in state person for all entities owning 25 or more single family or duplex residential rental properties responsible for receiving, coordinating, management of complaints regarding maintenance and other issues. *Passed House.***

# ADDRESSING NEEDS OF THOSE IN EXTENDED STAY MOTELS

- More than 30,000 people in metro Atlanta are living in extended stay hotels. More than 120 school buses are sent each day to pick up school children living at these hotels. Families are forced into this expensive undesirable situation for months and years as housing of last resort by a poor credit history, a record of evictions or an inability to scrape together the funds for a security deposit, first and last months rent, and utility deposits.
- A 2023 Georgia Supreme Court decision in *Efficiency Lodge v. Neason* recognized that the duration of stay and other relevant factual circumstances can establish that a person living for long period of time in such a hotel must be treated as a tenant for purposes of removal through eviction rather than the lockout option that an innkeeper can use for a transient guest.
- **HB 183** sought to reverse those protections and provide for summary ejection of a resident by law enforcement with no notice or due process, affording this population even fewer rights than a squatter who has entered the property illegally. *Bill did not pass out of committee but with majority leadership support may be amended on another bill or available in 2026.*
- **HB 492** aimed at Delta Airlines avoiding millions in hotel motel excise taxes in Clayton County would have ended the elimination of this tax after a person has resided in the hotel for over 90 days, with dire consequences for this low-income population of extended stay residents. We secured an amendment in subcommittee to continue the exemption after 90 days for individuals or non-profit organizations. *Bill did not pass out of Committee. Front page AJC story this week. Likely further action.*



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## Follow the Money

- Historic \$11.5 Billion Unobligated Surplus Funds
- FY 2025 Amended Budget passed and signed.
  - \$28 M add for Rural Workforce Housing Fund
- Governor proposed FY 2026 budget. House has made its changes. Now with the Senate.

# GOOD NEWS ON FUNDING ISSUES

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- **Senate Democratic Caucus Policy Platform endorsed allocating \$1 Billion of Surplus funds to the State Housing Trust Fund for the Homeless.**
- **Fears of renewed efforts from 2024 to reduce the State Low Income Housing Tax Credit have thus far failed to materialize.**
- **HB 165 that proposed a sales tax exemption for construction materials for non-profit organizations building/restoring affordable housing received a hearing. Later the bill was amended to provide a state tax deduction for damage resulting from Hurricane Helene. Author interested to reintroduce in 2026.**
- **HB 357 A \$10M per year allowable tax credit for Habitat for Humanity passed out of Committee but did not receive a floor vote. Available for passage in 2026.**
- **HB 159 – DCA’s bill to increase the bond limit for the Georgia Dream Program- mortgage and down payment assistance for low and moderate income home buyers passed the House by substitute increasing the bond limit from \$3B to \$6B.**

# FY 2026 BUDGET FOR HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

	Our Ask	Governor	House	Senate
<b>DBHDD</b>				
• Georgia Housing Voucher Program	\$20 M add	0	\$1.7 M add	?
• Coordinate homeless outreach		0	\$300 K	?
• Increase homeless community action teams		0	\$750 K	?
<b>DCA</b>				
• Surplus to State Housing Trust Fund	\$1 B	0	0	?
• Stable Housing Accountability Program		\$1 M	\$3M	?
• Housing Trust Fund for Homeless		\$7.83 M	\$7.83 M	?
• Home Modification funding (SILC)		0	\$500 K	?
• Emergency Rental Assistance Funding	\$25 M	0	\$4 M *	?

*\*"One-time funds to State Housing Trust Fund to improve homeless programs and leverage additional federal grants" – available for Emergency Rental Assistance?*

## NEXT STEPS

- Please respond to action alerts from HouseATL, Partners for Home, and others asking you to take action in the remaining days of the session.
- Identify your House and Senate members at the legislative website: [www.legis.ga.gov](http://www.legis.ga.gov) Find Your Legislator and contact them to support or oppose key bills.
- **Urge the Senate Appropriations Committee to add these funds:**
  - **\$20 Million increase to the Georgia Housing Voucher Program (DBHDD Adult Mental Health) for supportive housing vouchers and wrap around services.**
  - **\$25 Million to the DCA State Housing Trust Fund for the Homeless for flexible local grants for short term emergency rental assistance.**
- **Urge your Senator to vote YES on SR 310:** Senate Study Committee for Additional Resources for Transitioning Youth in Foster Care.
- **Urge your House member to vote YES on SB 170** creating an Interagency Council for Homelessness.





# THANK YOU

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