

OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

BURT  **JONES**

Georgia's 13th Lt. Governor

Legislation Supporting Georgia's Children Introduced

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Thursday, February 9, 2023

ATLANTA | Today, Senator Kay Kirkpatrick (R – Marietta), along with Senator Bill Cowsert (R – Athens), Senator Brian Strickland (R – McDonough) and Senator Blake Tillery (R – Vidalia), introduced legislation advancing the Department of Human Services 2023 Legislative Priorities.

“When the new Senate Children and Families Committee was created, I made a promise that the Senate would get to work quickly on issues that impact Georgia’s children in foster care,” said Lt. Governor Jones. “We are delivering on that promise with these four bills. This is the first step in my commitment to provide a bigger platform to these important issues and develop policies that benefit children and families across our state. I thank each of these Senators for taking the lead and moving these bills through the process.”

“As Chair of this committee and a bill sponsor, I am determined to get these bills moving quickly through the process,” said Senator Kirkpatrick. “I look forward to the collaboration between the Lt. Governor’s Office, the department and the Senate to take this initial step to create a more efficient and effective process for Georgia’s custody and guardianship procedures.” Senator Kirkpatrick sponsored Senate Bill 135 which establishes standards for admissibility and authenticity of genetic testing.

Senate Bill 134 addresses evidence code revisions for juvenile proceedings and is sponsored by Senator Cowsert. “Senate Bill 134 helps streamline proceedings addressing parental rights by expediting the use of medical narratives and makes it easier for children to testify in proceedings,” said Senator Cowsert.

“Last year, we asked the boots on the ground, our DFCS SAAG and CHIN coordinators, what steps we could take to simplify and streamline hearing procedures,” said Senator Tillery. “They responded with simplification of notice provisions included in SB 131.” Senator Tillery sponsored Senate Bill 131 which aligns notice requirements for permanent guardianship with termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings.

Senate Bill 133 establishes a uniform process for the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) to address custody of children for delinquency disposition orders and Child in Need of Services (CHIN) hearings. “This bill will make certain that we are doing

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everything in our power to protect our children and families from being placed in a system without exhausting all available remedies and without having the resources in place that all children deserve,” said Senator Strickland.

Please use this [link](#) to review and track all four pieces of legislation.

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Press Contact:

Ines Owens

Policy and Communications Director

Ines.Owens@ltgov.ga.gov