



HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE GROWTH AND SUPPORT

GHA **supports** efforts to increase the number of **qualified and job-ready staff** for health care facilities to help quickly address the critical health care workforce shortage in Georgia. To ensure that the available health care workforce can meet the needs of our growing communities and can respond to emergencies and other statewide healthcare demands, GHA will advocate for **additional funding** for education programs, incentives for medical educators, and flexibilities that allow facilities to provide care in creative ways that best suits their needs. Further, GHA supports legislative efforts to ensure **workforce safety** and the prevention of violence against workers in healthcare settings. In addition to clinical staff growth, GHA also supports statewide investments in the non-clinical health care workforce such as IT professionals, environmental services staff, and medical billing and coding experts, which are a vital part of hospital infrastructure.

GHA **opposes** staffing ratio mandates and other regulations that add significant costs or barriers that impact hospitals' ability to appropriately and efficiently provide care.



STREAMLINE AND SIMPLIFY THE CERTIFICATE OF NEED PROGRAM

GHA **supports** a state health planning process that ensures access to **all healthcare services** for Georgians, including the rural, uninsured, and underinsured populations. Meaningful, targeted changes to the Certificate of Need process, combined with reforms to other components of the state's health care system, will help provide **better access** to comprehensive and affordable care options to all patients while also protecting those essential, but vulnerable, services that are **vital to the health of our communities**.

PRESERVE AND ENHANCE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR ALL GEORGIANS

GHA **supports** a healthy Georgia and advocates for state and federal proposals that **increase coverage options** and reduce the number of uninsured and underinsured patients. Statistics show that patients who have health insurance typically have **better health outcomes** and financial stability—because those with health insurance seek the appropriate health and preventive care in the right setting. GHA **supports** access to **affordable health insurance** for all Georgians, particularly for those who have historically been underserved with regard to health care services. Further, GHA **supports** efforts to ensure patients have full access to their insurance benefits through adequate provider networks and appropriate reimbursement for hospital services and without overburdensome administrative requirements or inappropriate denials of service.

Delays in authorization of medically necessary care by insurers lead to poor patient outcomes and limit access to timely and appropriate services, and GHA **opposes** any blanket efforts by insurers to interfere or create unnecessary burdens in a provider/patient care plan, including access to medications and therapies. GHA also **opposes** efforts to place restrictions on provider network participation and payments, including tiered networks or restrictions based solely on the site of service, as well administrative burdens that result in roadblocks to timely payments for medically necessary services, which drive up the cost of care for all patients.

TORT REFORM

GHA **supports** efforts to modernize Georgia's tort laws to **reduce unnecessary litigation costs** to businesses, **preserve access to care** for Georgia citizens in need of high-risk services, and protect the health care community's ability to provide high-quality care to all, regardless of ability to pay. Georgia's current tort laws have encouraged extremely high jury awards and incentivized lawsuits in cases where mediation may have been a viable option. Frivolous lawsuits lead to increased cost of care for all Georgia's patients, and GHA **supports** efforts to improve Georgia's tort statute by addressing "phantom damages" and "anchoring" practices, prohibiting venue shopping, and other considerations that **protect patients' rights** while preventing unnecessary lawsuits.





IMPROVE ACCESS TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCES

GHA **supports** resources that bolster a full-spectrum behavioral health system, including the availability of comprehensive community-based services and enhancement of acute inpatient resources, which ensures **access to safe, high-quality care** in the most appropriate setting, irrespective of patient financial ability.

SUPPORT ADEQUATE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR HOSPITALS

GHA **supports**:

- Adequate state and federal funding for programs designed to support hospitals and other health care providers.
- Mechanisms that require the state to seek and consider **input from stakeholders** when making significant policy decisions impacting Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids, and the State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP).
- The maintenance and growth of Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) federal funds, as well as **sufficient state-matching funds** for DSH payments to private hospitals.
- Taking **full advantage** of federal Medicaid funds available for hospitals through the Upper Payment Limit (UPL) programs and Directed Payment Programs (DPP.)
- Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids, and SHBP policies that **adequately compensate providers** for the costs of care, improve long-term health outcomes, and address chronic health conditions with a positive return on investment.
- **Tax credits** and state budget allocations for at-risk hospitals and targeted programs like the Rural Hospital Tax Credit, Rural Hospital Stabilization Grant, trauma center designations, and others.
- **Renewal** of the Hospital Provider Payment Agreement.
- Development of a new Provider Payment Agreement and Medicaid **directed payment program** for behavioral health facilities.



PROTECT NOT-FOR-PROFIT SALES TAX EXEMPTIONS AND TAX CREDITS

GHA **supports** the preservation of the **tax-exempt status** of not-for-profit hospitals and the extension of tax credits for **contributions to rural hospitals** and other clinical programs. These tax policies provide a significant **return on investment** by allowing hospitals to invest in innovative care options, facility improvements, statewide workforce development, and other patient-centered initiatives. All hospitals provide important **community benefits** that greatly exceed the value of their tax exemptions, especially considering the value of the various taxes that not-for-profit hospitals do pay.



Other Policy Positions



CLINICAL EDUCATION

GHA **supports** adequate funding for state and federal programs that support **medical education and clinician recruitment**, including current and newly implemented graduate medical education residency programs to improve Georgia's health care workforce climate. Further, GHA **supports** efforts to **increase education slots** for other areas of clinical education in both the classroom and healthcare settings.



HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

GHA **supports** efforts to improve **access to innovative health technology** and communications, which are integral to implementing delivery and payment systems, including telehealth and telemedicine, information and cyber security, patient access to medical information, provider access to artificial intelligence (AI) resources, and health data integrity.



INDIGENT CARE MANDATES

Hospitals continuously strive to meet the growing needs of their communities while adhering to established federal standards and strict reporting requirements regarding community benefits for not-for-profit hospitals. Through their Community Health Needs Assessments, hospitals establish robust plans for **meeting the needs of patients** in their communities by designing and implementing programs to address care for indigent patients, maternal mortality, social determinants of health and health equity. GHA **opposes** additional mandates that limit hospitals' ability to respond to the diverse and unique needs of their communities.



PATIENT SAFETY INITIATIVES

GHA **supports** hospitals' ongoing patient-safety efforts to **improve health care outcomes** for patients, including eradicating medication errors and hospital-acquired infections, while providing patient and family centered care in a safe environment.

GHA **opposes** unnecessary and ineffective legislative and regulatory burdens that hinder the provision of quality health care via unfunded mandates that are not backed by credible research or national standards. Further, GHA **opposes** policies by commercial insurers to deny or delay patient care or require medications and services be delivered in potentially unsafe conditions or situations.



REGULATIONS

GHA **supports** state and federal health care policies that provide for governmental **transparency and cooperation** while establishing clear and reasonable standards that protect the ability of health care facilities and providers to carry out their duties effectively. Further, GHA **supports** the promotion and adoption of initiatives that enable health care professionals to deliver high-quality care according to established best practices.

GHA **opposes** policies that are duplicative or offer little return on investment and, at great expense to the state and health care providers, do little to effectively reduce true fraud and waste.



SCOPE OF PRACTICE

GHA **supports** policies that allow licensed health care professionals to practice to the **full extent of their training** and experience to ensure **appropriate access to care** in all areas of the state, especially medically underserved areas. Scope of practice expansion creates an important opportunity for Georgia to help manage the health care workforce shortage and lower the overall cost of care. Targeted improvements to bedside nursing scope of practice would assist with **recruitment, retention, and hospital efficiency**.



TRAUMA FUNDING

GHA **supports** additional trauma care funding to support a system that **saves hundreds of lives** each year. Policymakers should seek to stabilize the existing trauma hospitals and other health care providers who offer trauma services while encouraging other appropriate hospitals and health care providers to enter the network. Additionally, GHA **supports** state efforts to **prioritize funding and support** for other areas of trauma response such as emergency medical services (EMS) and hospital emergency preparedness programs.