

**DATE:** September 26, 2023  
**TO:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**FROM:** Isaiah Hugley, City Manager  
**SUBJECT:** 'Draft Legislative Agenda'

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The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Hometown Connection/Legislative Agenda will be held on October 12, 2023 at the Columbus Convention and Trade Center, Foundry Room from 11:30-1:30. Attached you will find the 'Draft Legislative Agenda' for your review. If you have any additional items, please submit to Teasha Hollis as soon as possible.

On Tuesday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, the final Legislative Agenda items will be placed on my agenda as individual items for your consideration and approval. Those approved items will be presented to our Legislative Delegation during the Hometown Connection/Legislative meeting.

If you have questions or concerns, please let me know.

# COLUMBUS CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT

## 2024 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

### I. ADOPT THE MENTAL HEALTH MODEL:

The Columbus Consolidated Government is requesting that the local legislative delegation to the Georgia General Assembly enhance Georgia citizens' access to vital mental health services, including the provision of state budgetary funding for additional behavioral health crisis centers across the state, additional co-responder units, and other resources to assist those with mental health and substance abuse disorders. *(Recommended by ACCG and City Manager, Isaiah Hugley)*

#### Explanation:

The Columbus Consolidated Government request the local delegation continue efforts in the 2024 legislative session of the Georgia General Assembly to enhance Georgia citizens' access to vital mental health services, including the provision of state budgetary funding for additional behavioral health crisis centers across the state, additional co-responders' units, and other resources to assist those with mental health and substance abuse disorders.

### II. ONE USER UTILITY BILL:

The Columbus Consolidated Government is requesting that the local legislative delegation to the Georgia General Assembly introduce and support statewide legislation that would require public utilities to bill local governments and school districts on a "one user" basis which would allow billing discounts that would benefit all taxpayers. *(Request of Judge Bobby Peters, Superior Court Judge)*

#### Explanation:

Currently each building or each school owned by a local government or school district is billed separately. However, legislation could require that the rate charged be based on the total usage of all of the government or school district buildings and facilities of that one owner. Aggregating the total usage of each governmental owner would mean a much lower rate per gallon of water or per kilowatt hour of electricity. A local government or school district could still use separate meters to track usage in each facility for efficiency, but the local government or school district should be given credit for total usage to get a lower rate.

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### III. TECHNOLOGY FEE SURCHARGE ON RECORDER'S COURT FINES:

The Columbus Consolidated Government is requesting that the local legislative delegation to the Georgia General Assembly permit imposition of court costs of \$10.00 to be added as a surcharge to each fine imposed by Recorder's Court, effective July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2034 to be used to defray technology costs of the Recorder's Court. *(Request of Judge David Ranieri, Recorder's Court Judge)*

#### Explanation:

Recorder's Court is requesting to impose and collect a technology fee for each fine imposed, not to exceed \$10.00 for a period of ten years. The technology fees would be used exclusively to provide for the technological needs of the Recorder's Court such as: computer hardware purchase, lease, maintenance, and installation; imaging, scanning, facsimile, communications, projection, and printing equipment; and software purchase, lease, maintenance, development, and installation.

### IV. ADVANCED PRACTICE REGISTERED NURSES (APRN) LICENSING:

The Columbus Consolidated Government along with the United Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (UAPRN) of West Georgia Columbus chapter is requesting that the local legislative delegation to the Georgia General Assembly support legislation which would remove barriers to APRN practice whereby increasing access to cost effective, quality, and safe healthcare services. *(Request of Councilor Jerry "Pop" Barnes)*

#### Explanation:

The legislation would separately license APRN's in order to allow them to provide expanded health care services. Currently APRN is issued an "authorization to practice" under an RN's license. Independent licensing could allow them to provide the following services which they currently cannot:

1. APRN's would be added to the list of the Department of Revenue's approved practitioners to order disability parking permits.
2. APRN's would be authorized to write prescriptions for Schedule II controlled substances: Stimulants-for ADHD, ADD. Opiates prescriptions would be a 3-day supply with other criteria.
3. APRN's would be authorized to certify orders for home health agency to make home visits.

Approval of the above proposed legislation will remove delays in patient care and treatment, increase access to optimal healthcare, and improve healthcare outcomes for the citizens of Georgia.

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## Carry Over Requests from Previous Years

### V. SHORT TERM RENTALS:

The Columbus Consolidated Government is requesting the local legislative delegation support the GMA policy position on short-term rentals. The CCG supports local control of the regulation of short-term rentals as necessary for quality of life, public safety, and a competitive lodging marketplace. This Council urges the local delegation to support maintaining local control of units used as short-term rentals, subject to all applicable state laws and ordinances. *(Request of Councilor Toyia Tucker/Carry Over From Previous Years)*

#### Explanation:

The current Georgia Municipal Association policy provides as follows: Short-term or vacation rentals are popular in certain areas of the state, which often creates commercial competition inside residential neighborhoods. Lodging facilitator legislation passed in 2021 helps to level the playing field between short-term rental providers and more traditional hoteliers and bed and breakfast owners. Current state law requires short term rental operators to remit the appropriate state and local taxes on their transactions. Aside from taxation, municipal governments have a vested interest in balancing the community impact of short-term rentals. Parking, noise, and party houses can be recurring issues with short-term rental properties in unregulated environments. Operating lodging businesses in residential settings defeats the purpose behind residential designations, unless properly governed with clear guidelines from the local government.

### VI. MUSICAL PRODUCTION STATE SALES TAX CREDIT:

The Columbus Consolidated Government is requesting that the local legislative delegation to the Georgia General Assembly introduce legislation to expand certain state sales tax credits for production companies producing music or musical theatre productions to make it more feasible for production companies to take advantage of these credits in Georgia. *(Request of Mayor Pro Tem Gary Allen/Carryover From Previous Years)*

#### Explanation:

The current legislation provides for certain state sales tax credits for production companies producing music or musical theatre productions in Georgia while touring and defines parameters including the dollar amount to be spent in the State of Georgia

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over a certain period and length of time that a production must tour in order to be awarded the state sales tax credit. The current legislation excludes most music and music theatre production companies from taking advantage of the tax credit thereby severely limiting most production activity to outside the State of Georgia.

### VII. AMENDMENT OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST PROVISION FOR REDEVELOPMENT POWERS LAW:

The Columbus Consolidated Government is requesting the local legislative delegation introduce/support legislation to revise and to clarify the conflict of interest provisions in the Redevelopment Powers Law which address the participation of local government elective and appointive officials and employees in the creation and administration of Tax Allocation Districts. *(Request of Councilor Tucker and Glenn Davis/Carry Over From Previous Years)*

#### Explanation:

1) With respect to property acquired after the designation of a redevelopment area or TAD, the current law very broadly prohibits any "elected official, appointed official, **or employee** of any political subdivision, board, commission, or redevelopment agency from voluntarily acquiring any interest, direct or indirect, in any property contract or transaction or proposed contract or transaction in connection with the redevelopment of that redevelopment area..." The proposed revision would remove the blanket prohibition against voluntary property acquisition in a redevelopment area and instead provide that any official or employee who has a direct ownership interest in a property that is proposed to receive payment of redevelopment costs shall disclose the interest in writing to the legislative body and shall not vote or in any way participate in considering the matter or seek to influence the votes of others on the matter.

2) The current law requires that any elected or appointed official or employee of a political subdivision who has acquired any interest direct or indirect in property in the redevelopment area within the two years immediately prior to the date the plan is submitted to the local legislative body shall disclose the interest in writing 30 days in advance and "not participate in any action of the political subdivision which affects that property." The revision would cut the time of written notice to 5 days and limit the coverage of the provision to public officers as defined by O.C.G.A. Section 21-5-3 (22) instead of the current general reference to all elected officials, appointed officials and employees.

3) The proposed revision also refines the definition of the property interest covered by the conflict provision. The current law covers any transaction which facilitates the acquisition "any interest direct or indirect" in property and substitutes a direct ownership interest in property as defined by O.C.G.A. Section 21-5-3(8).

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## VIII. COUNTY SPECIAL LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX MAINTENANCE RESERVE:

The Columbus Consolidated Government is requesting that the legislative delegation consider amendments to the County Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax imposed by Part 1 of Article 3 of Chapter 8 of Title 48 of the official Code of Georgia Annotation to allow consolidated governments to expend up to 5% of the tax levied to be spent for future maintenance of the capital outlay projects approved by the referendum levying the tax. *(Request of Councilor Judy Thomas/Carry Over From Previous Years)*

### Explanation:

Previous capital outlay projects in the Columbus Consolidated Government have demonstrated that when tax funds are expended on significant capital infrastructure, a maintenance reserve would greatly assist in improving the useful life and efficiency of such facilities and allow the better and more timely upkeep of projects built with taxpayer funds.

## IX. FUNDING FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, ADDICTIVE DISEASES AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES:

The Columbus Consolidated Government is requesting that the legislative delegation advocate for support of a robust system of care for behavioral health, addictive diseases and developmental disabilities, and additional funding for crisis intervention teams throughout the state. *(Request of Councilor Toyia Tucker/Carry Over From Previous Years)*

### Explanation:

The Columbus Consolidated Government recognizes the need for a robust system of care that supports recovery and independence for people living with mental illness, addictive disorders and developmental disabilities. Locally provided state services to individuals living with disabilities are critical to providing an appropriate safety net and an alternative to incarceration. There should be an adequate number of crisis intervention teams around the state to help public safety officials manage critical situations as needed. These services also help people meaningfully contribute to and participate in the life of our communities.

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### X. PERSONAL CARE HOMES (Prompt Notification of Local Authorities Upon Licensing):

The Columbus Consolidated Government respectfully requests that the local legislative delegation introduce state-wide legislation that will require prompt notification of county and city police and fire departments, licensing departments, and planning and zoning departments upon licensing or licensing changes of child-caring institutions, foster care homes, and personal care homes as defined and used above. *(Request of Councilor Glenn Davis/Carry Over From Previous Years)*

#### Explanation:

This Council recognizes that the State of Georgia licenses facilities for various types of assistance for both children and adults in a home-like setting. Notification of county agencies and officials is often lacking at the time licenses to such facilities are granted by the State, including but not limited to, “child-caring institutions” defined at O.C.G.A. Section 49-5-3, “foster care homes” as defined at O.C.G.A. Section 49-5-60, and “personal care homes” as used in O.C.G.A. Section 25-2-13. The lack of awareness of the licensed facilities or changes in licensing status may prevent local governmental entities from acting promptly to protect the health and welfare of those persons in such facilities. The Council hereby requests that the local legislative delegation introduce a state-wide bill to require prompt notification to certain county/municipal officials upon licensing or changes in license status of child-caring institutions, foster care homes, and personal care homes by the State of Georgia.

### XI. PERSONAL CARE HOMES (Minimum Staffing Requirement):

The Columbus Consolidated Government is requesting the local legislative delegation to the Georgia General Assembly introduce state-wide legislation that will require minimum staffing of two trained supervisors or managers between the hours of 6:00 pm and 6:00 am at child-caring institutions, foster care homes, and personal care homes. We also request that the local delegation to the Georgia General Assembly require that all such child-caring institutions, foster care homes, and personal care homes be accredited by a national accrediting body such as COA or CARF. *(Request of Councilor John House and Glenn Davis/Carry Over From Previous Years)*

#### Explanation:

The Council supports legislation to require better staffing and training for personal care homes operated in Columbus and the State of Georgia.

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### **XII. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY:**

The Columbus Consolidated Government is requesting that the local legislative delegation introduce an amendment to said statewide legislation to allow cities and counties to enact localized anti-displacement policies for properties in Qualified Census Tracts (QCTs) and Difficult Development Areas (DDAs) economically depressed zones as defined by general law of the General Assembly. *(Request of Councilor Toyia Tucker/Carry Over From Previous Year)*

#### **Explanation:**

O.C.G.A. Section 44-7-19 prohibits city and county governments from enacting, maintaining, or enforcing “any ordinance or resolution which would regulate in any way the amount of rent to be charged for privately owned, single-family or multiple-unit residential rental property.” Rising rents compound the overall financial insecurity of many households. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a cost-burdened household as one that spends more than 30 percent of its income on housing costs. The onslaught of pandemic-related job losses, rising health care costs, and increased cost of necessities due to inflation and supply chain issues likely worsened the outlook for many renters. The pain of rising rents and the associated financial insecurity disproportionately affects single parents, individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with multiple or intersecting identities. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic fallout succeeded in shining a harsh light on the ongoing housing crisis.

### **XIII. NEW OPTIONS WAIVER PROGRAM AND COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORTS WAIVER PROGRAM:**

The Columbus Consolidated Government is requesting the legislative delegation to the General Assembly evaluate and appropriately fund operation of the New Options Waiver (NOW) and the Comprehensive Supports Waiver Program (COMP), which offer home- and community-based services for people with intellectual disabilities (ID) or developmental disabilities (DD). *(Request of Councilor Toyia Tucker/Carry Over From Previous Year)*

#### **Explanation:**

See fact sheet attached.



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### XIV. CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE POSTING:

The Columbus Consolidated Government is requesting the legislative delegation to the General Assembly introduce statewide legislation that will require posting of appropriate hotlines to report abuse at child-caring institutions, foster care homes, and personal care homes. *(Request of Councilor Glenn Davis/Carry Over From Previous Years)*

#### Explanation:

The licensing and supervision of child-caring institutions, foster care homes, and personal care homes as defined at O.C.G.A. Section 49-5-3, O.C.G.A. Section 49-5-60, and Section 25-2-13 have become critical issues facing the state and county governments. this Council desires that the local delegation to the Georgia General Assembly introduce legislation to require the posting of appropriate hotlines to report abuse in all child-caring institutions, foster care homes, and personal care homes such as the hotline 1-866-END-HTGA (1-866-363-4842).

### XV. LEGITIMATION PROCEDURES:

The Columbus Consolidated Government is requesting the legislative delegation to the General Assembly introduce a resolution supporting the legislative study of legitimation procedures to make them more affordable and accessible to fathers of limited means who desire to take responsibility for a role in the life of their biological children. *(Request of Councilor Glenn Davis/ Carry Over From Previous Year)*

#### Explanation:

Georgia law requires a biological father who is not married to the mother at the time of the child's birth to file a separate legal petition in order to legitimate and obtain legal rights as a parent of that biological child. Legislative study of the legitimation procedures required by Georgia law to determine whether they can be revised to make them more accessible and less costly would further increase well-being and economic security for the children of this State.

### XVI. TAX ALLOCATION LAW AMENDMENT:

The Columbus Consolidated Government is requesting the legislative delegation to the Georgia general assembly introduce an amendment to O.C.G.A. Section 36-44-21

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which allows voluntary acquisition of property within a TAD by elected officials and employees of a political subdivision, but prohibits receipt of any TAD funding by such elected officials or employees; and to further amend said law so as to clarify that elected officials may conduct business within a TAD and that citizens owning a business, property or a home within a TAD can run for and hold any elected office in a county which has created TAD districts. *(Request of Councilor Charmaine Crabb/Carry Over From Previous Year)*

### **Explanation:**

This resolution requests the legislative delegation to introduce an amendment to the TAD conflict-of-interest law to permit voluntary acquisition of property within a TAD by elected officials or employees of the county in question, but to prohibit the receipt of any TAD funding by such elected officials or employees.