



Voices for Georgia's Children - by Mindy Binderman

Georgia's children have consistently ranked in the bottom of the nation* as measured by their health and well being while the state's economy has done very well in the past quarter century, with national ranking in the 20s.

This disparity helps explain why Voices for Georgia's Children came into being in 2003 as an advocate on behalf of kids in decisions affecting them. Voices for Georgia's Children engages in research, analysis and advocacy to assist the state's leadership in developing sound policy decisions that improve the well being of children. The independent non-profit seeks to build consensus on a long-term agenda based on measurable goals (see box) that will significantly impact children's health, safety, education, connectedness and employability.

Voices bases much of its activity around policy and legislative agendas supporting these five result areas. The organization's advocacy activities are directed toward members of the Georgia General Assembly throughout the year but take on a greater sense of urgency during the annual legislative sessions. Following is a sample of the issues it worked on during the 40-day session in 2008.

Safety Voices opposed HB 89 which, if signed by Governor Perdue, would

impact the safety of Georgia's children by allowing firearms in parks, on public transportation, and at restaurants.

Health Voices supported HB 340 to expand PeachCare and Medicaid within approved federal guidelines and offer a buy-in program to provide high-quality, affordable health insurance addressing the needs of Georgia's uninsured children. This bill did not receive a hearing. The organization opposed HB 977 which provides tax incentives for companies that offer high deductive health plans but does very little to make health care affordable for families. Families who are covered by such plans would have very high out of pocket costs for visits to the doctor to treat illness or chronic conditions such as asthma. HB 977 passed the legislature and is awaiting the Governor's signature. Voices supported the extension of Medicaid benefits to foster care children until they reach the age of 21. This measure was included in the FY 09 budget.

Early Care and Learning Voices released its policy platform for 0 to 5 year olds entitled Compounding Interest in early 2008 (<http://www.georgiavoices.org/CompoundingInterest.aspx>). Based upon the policy recommendations in the report, it advocated for greater availability and quality of the publicly funded pre-K program, as well as extending

the program to 3 year olds as outlined in HB 939. While HB 939 did not receive a vote, a House resolution establishing a study committee on PreK was adopted. Voices also worked successfully with our partners to ensure the inclusion of over \$20 million dollars in the FY 09 budget for additional child care subsidy slots.

Juvenile Justice Voices is a member of the newly instituted JUSTGeorgia coalition (www.justga.org) that advocates for more equitable justice and social service systems for children. Work in 2008 focused on building and creating awareness for the coalition. The next step is the development of a 2009 legislative package that JUSTGeorgia hopes will create a new Georgia Juvenile Code in the near term and, ultimately, bring change to system practices covering health, education and children's services.

The underlying rationale for Voices' work is simply this: By building a sound foundation, children can become active, responsible, employed citizens who can sustain Georgia's economic growth and leadership. If the state does meet long term goals as prescribed by Voices for Georgia's Children, chances are good that the results will be reflected in higher quality of life for all Georgians.

*Rankings based on annual Kids Count report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.



10 Year Objectives

Result Area	Indicator	2005 Rank	2005 Rate	2015 Objective
Safe	Maltreatment Cases	41	19/1000	14/1000
Healthy	% Insured	41	87%	96% (by 2008)
Educated	4th Grade Reading on NAEP	40	59% Basic & Above	72% Basic & Above
Connected	Juvenile Detention Rate	23	273/100K	170/100K
Employable	% 16-19 yrs not in school or employed	43	11%	8%

Elaborated by
Health Services
Access Committee

The Hispanic Health Coalition of Georgia is funded by National Council La Raza (NCLR), and the Funds for Southern Communities.

Advocacy Day in Washington DC *by Mayira Bunting*

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) held its Fifth Annual National Issue Briefing and Advocacy Day in Washington, DC on March 5 and 6. More than 300 delegates from Latino community-based organizations across the country went to Capitol Hill to raise awareness and support for legislative issues affecting the Latino community in an effort to connect communities and citizens with their government.

Georgia was one of the biggest groups of delegates with 12 people. Among Georgia Organizations represented were the Hispanic Health Coalition of Georgia, Inc., Latinos Education and Justice Organization (LEJO), Coalición de Lideres Latinos, Latin American Service Organization (LASO), and Utopia (a High School students group from Calhoun).



The first day included a workshop on Lobbying versus Advocacy, key speakers, and presentations on: Health Equity in Health Reform, "DREAM Act", No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, Fore-

closures and Workforce Development. On second day the delegates met with US congressmen and staff members. Georgia delegates met with staff members of both senators (Johnny Isakson, Saxby Chambliss) and four House representatives (John Lewis, Hank Johnson, Nathan Deal, and Jack Kingston).

Susy Martorell, along with Mayira Bunting, from the Hispanic Health Coalition of Georgia, Inc., brought the concerns of the coalition regarding Medicaid and SCHIP reduction of enrollment since 2005; Implications of the

Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) and access to health care for eligible citizens; and requests for their support of HB 3014 Health Equality and Accountability Act. Other Georgia delegates presented their concerns about the urgency for more comprehensive immigration reform, real cases of how excellent and high achiever immigrant students can not pursue higher education after High School, the situation of foreclosures in Georgia and a case of family separation after deportation.



Georgia's delegates with Congressman Nathan Deal (District 9 which runs from Rockdale and Hall County up to North Carolina and Tennessee and southwest of Alabama.

Save the Date

April 29 3rd HHC GA HEALTH OPEN CALL IN GEORGIA (see box below)

May 16 HHC GA DIALOGUE TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES IN HALL COUNTY : Meeting in Gainesville supported by Funds for Southern Communities and Wellcare of Georgia . Pre-registration required . More Information at hhcga.membership@yahoo.com

A Website to Check Out!

WAVE OF HOPE : NCLR "launched a campaign to end hate speech in the immigration debate and called on presidential candidates and news media networks to divorce themselves from known hate and vigilantism": http://www.nclr.org/section/wave_of_hope/

3rd HHC GA Health Open Call in Georgia

"Services and Program for Adults
with Disabilities"

Tuesday, April 29th 2008
9:00-10:00 AM

To register for this Free HHC GA teleconference
RSVP hhcga.membership@yahoo.com
With your name, organization, position, phone & email
The teleconference will be a 60 minute call and will
include speaker presentations and Q&A.