

Senate Bill 424

By: Senators Lucas of the 26th, Harbison of the 15th, Hill of the 4th, Kirk of the 13th, Sims of the 12th and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 2 of Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the  
2 Department of Community Health, so as to provide for the establishment of the Center for  
3 Rural Health Innovation and Sustainability; to provide for requirements and purposes; to  
4 provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

6 SECTION 1.

7 Chapter 2 of Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the Department  
8 of Community Health, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

9 "31-2-15.

10 (a) Subject to appropriations by the General Assembly, the department shall enter into a  
11 contract with an institution of higher education in this state to establish the Center for Rural  
12 Health Innovation and Sustainability. The institution of higher education shall meet the  
13 following qualifications:

14 (1) Have a school of medicine;

15 (2) Have a deep understanding and appreciation of rural community dynamics and assets  
16 and use that knowledge to preserve and enhance resources that are already present in the  
17 community;

18 (3) Have a network of community based preceptors state-wide and core partnerships with  
19 regional hospitals;

20 (4) Have faculty that includes nationally recognized experts in rural health issues; and

21 (5) Be willing to commit to a long-term relationship with rural communities in this state  
22 to continue to address a changing and challenging landscape.

23 (b) The purpose of the center shall be to:

24 (1) Offer comprehensive, best-practice, impartial, locally relevant guidance to rural  
25 communities to assist in the establishment of accessible appropriate health care in every  
26 rural community in this state;

- 27 (2) Gather and use data to identify needs, measure success, and be a trusted source for  
28 local and state governments;
- 29 (3) Organize and direct rural health planning and provide quality evaluation of the effect  
30 of intervention or financial support;
- 31 (4) Serve as a trusted resource and engage, organize, and hold accountable every  
32 institution, vendor, and government agency that interacts with rural communities looking  
33 for sustainable health care solutions;
- 34 (5) Develop innovative solutions and assure, once implemented, accurate analysis of  
35 effectiveness and cost efficacy;
- 36 (6) Assist in the development and preservation of a physician workforce and  
37 physician-led care and support mid-level providers such as pharmacists, nurse  
38 practitioners, and physician assistants; and
- 39 (7) Regularly provide education to hospital boards, county commissioners, health care  
40 and hospital administrators, and others, as needed, to promote understanding, compliance,  
41 protection of resources, and institutional strength."

42 **SECTION 2.**

43 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.