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*Science for Georgia's* Georgia General Assembly  
**LEGISLATIVE SCORECARD**

A ROUNDUP OF HOW GA LEGISLATION  
UTILIZED EVIDENCE-BASED BEST-PRACTICES

**2021**

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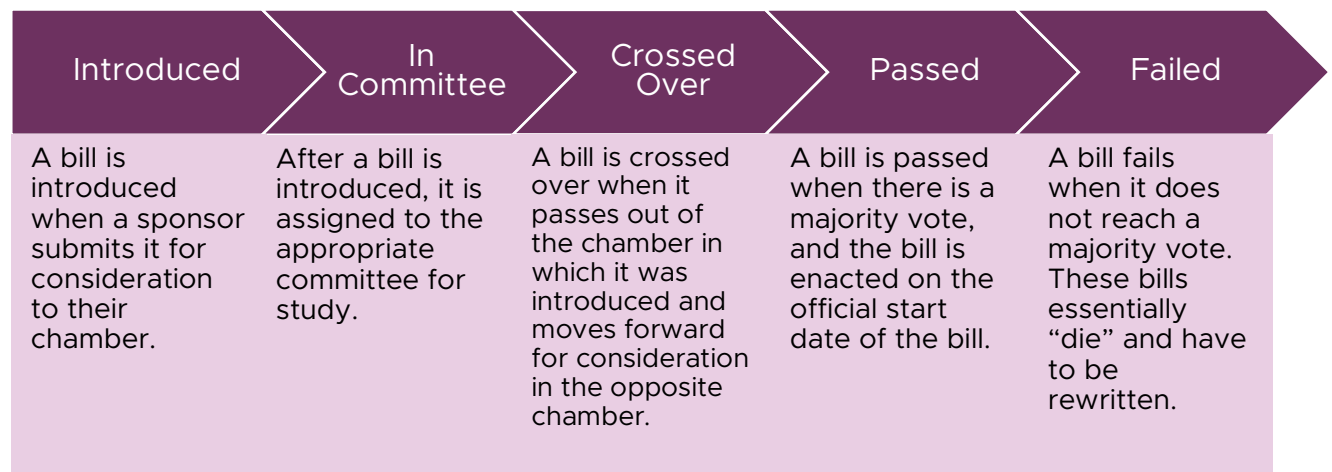
# Legislative Scorecard 2021

During each legislative session, there are hundreds of bills that Georgia's General Assembly members deliberate on. Tracking all of them is a herculean task, and here we present overviews of select pieces of legislation from the 2021-2022 Legislative Session that effect science and technology or should utilize science and technology.

As a nonprofit organization, our motives in preparing and providing this type of information is to disseminate scientific knowledge to public and not to support or reject specific legislation. Instead, we have created a rubric to evaluate the science utilized in the legislation.

## Stages of Legislation

Each General Assembly Session lasts for two years. Right now, we are in the middle of the 2021-2022 session. The legislators have adjourned for the year but bills that have not passed are still available to be considered in 2022.



## About Science for Georgia

Science for Georgia, Inc is a 501(c)(3) whose mission is to improve communication between scientists and the public; increase public engagement with science; and advocate for the responsible use of science in public policy.

Contact us at:  
 1700 Northside Dr, Ste A7, PMB 916, Atlanta, GA 30318  
[info@sci4ga.org](mailto:info@sci4ga.org)

## Evaluation Rubric

There are many things to consider aside from “scientific scope” such as economics, politics, pragmatism, fairness, morality, and cost. We encourage you to think about legislation from all angles. Herein, find information from the scientific point-of-view. It should be but one factor utilized when considering legislation.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Variables Used to Assess Legislation</b>				
<b>Scientific Merit</b> Does it utilize scientific research accurately?	<b>Follows Science</b> Yes, this does follow scientific research accurately. Here's why....		<b>Does Not Utilize Science</b> No, this does not present scientific research accurately. Here's why....		
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b> Who is going to be impacted? Is it equitable? List stakeholders & opinions.	<b>Negative</b> Majority of stakeholders disagree		<b>Positive</b> Majority of stakeholders agree		
<b>Reach</b> Does it reach its target audience?	<b>No Impact</b> No impact on target audience.	<b>Narrow Impact</b> Impacts narrow segment.	<b>Majority Impact</b> Impacts majority with exceptions.	<b>All Impacted</b> Affects all target audience equally	
<b>Measurable Metrics?</b> Is the data available or being measured?	<b>No Ability to Track</b> There is no data and it is not accessible	<b>Limited Ability to Track</b> A minimal amount of data exists and is accessible.	<b>Mostly Trackable</b> A majority of the data exists and is accessible	<b>Complete Transparency</b> All data available to track metrics	
<b>Political Feasibility</b> Level of opposition and partisan disagreement.	<b>Majority Opposed</b> Majority disagreed, regardless of party.	<b>Party-Line Split</b> Vote along party-lines.	<b>Majority in Favor</b> Few dissenting votes.	<b>Complete Consensus</b> Less than five 'Nays'	

## ENVIRONMENT: COAL ASH WASTE DISPOSAL

[HB 176](#) requires that coal ash be disposed of in lined, permitted solid waste landfills to ensure that coal combustion residuals are stored, collected, transported, and disposed of in a manner that does not adversely affect the health, safety, and well-being of the public and does not degrade the quality of the environment. Currently, the disposal of coal ash, is not regulated.

**Stage:** Introduced

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. This bill regulates coal ash disposal and management according to recommended best practices. <a href="#">Coal Ash</a> , the leftover waste from burning coal, affects Georgian's health and well-being. Coal Ash contains arsenic, lead, mercury, and other heavy metals. When these chemicals seep into water or soil, they cause health problems for exposed populations which are often low-income communities. People living near coal ash have a <a href="#">1 in 50</a> chance of developing cancer from drinking contaminated water, which is much higher than the <a href="#">4 in 1000</a> change of cancer in the general population.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . This bill affects those that live close to coal plants. There is support from many environmental stakeholders including the <a href="#">Georgia Conservancy</a> , <a href="#">Protect Georgia</a> , Sierra Club, Earth Justice, and Georgia Water Coalition.
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	Affects all target audience equally. Proper disposal of coal ash will prevent negative health outcomes from those near the 12 coal plants in Georgia.
<b>Measurable Impacts?</b>	Complete Transparency	All data available to track metrics. Progress can be measured by publicly available air and water quality data. Health outcomes can be tracked through hospital data.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-Line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. No vote has been taken.

## ENVIRONMENT: ETHYLENE OXIDE PERMITS

[HB 3/ SB 180](#) seeks additional permit requirements for facilities that emit ethylene oxide. Specifically, the legislation requires facilities that release more than 50 pounds of ethylene oxide annually to: 1) allow the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) to install monitoring equipment, which the Georgia EPD pays for 2) require the facility to form a plan to continuously monitor emissions and keep daily records for the term of the permit, which is done by an independent third party paid for by the facility 3) require reports to be available and updated twice a year on the EPD website 4) set further off-gassing requirements and 5) require facilities emitting ethylene oxide to submit an ambient air monitoring plan.

By requiring both reporting by Georgia EPD and an independent assessor, and releasing reports publicly, this legislation seeks to remove the “fox guarding the henhouse” for ethylene oxide emissions.

**Stage:** Introduced

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. Recently, ethylene oxide, commonly used to sterilize medical equipment, has been linked to an <a href="#">increase in cancer</a> in communities near facilities that release the gas beyond state-permitted quantities.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . The stakeholders of this bill are those that live near ethylene oxide plants who <a href="#">support regulation</a> , and the ethylene oxide plant owners, who have not publicly commented on the bill.
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	Affects all target audiences equally, because all ethylene oxide emitting facilities are subject to regulation.
<b>Measurable Impacts?</b>	Complete Transparency	All data available to track metrics. Impacts can be measured by publicly available air and water quality data. The third party monitoring ensures the data will be collected and presented in an unbiased way.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-Line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. No votes have been conducted yet.



## ENVIRONMENT: GEORGIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACT

[HB 339](#), the Georgia Environmental Justice Act of 2021, creates a 22-member commission to conduct scientific analysis, including case studies, and prepare a report on target facilities that require environmental permits. These commission will analyze 1) health statistics of the population surrounding each site, 2) past violations of human health, 3) economic factors that caused facilities that have health implications to be placed in low-income or predominantly Black communities, and 4) policies that influenced these land use decisions. The purpose of these reports is to better understand the neighborhoods that are particularly at high risk from threats to human health, and understand how to create more equitable outcomes.

**Stage:** Introduced

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. The commission is collecting research that measures existing environmental injustice in Georgia, to better understand how to prevent environmental injustice. This is the first proposed legislation in Georgia that directly addresses environmental justice.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . This bill affects those that live close to superfund sites, industrial plants, or waste sites, as well as those in high environmental risk areas. There is support from many environmental stakeholders including Sierra Club and <a href="#">Protect Georgia</a> . <a href="#">The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) has not taken a stance on the bill.</a>
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	Affects all target audience equally. The target audience are communities near environmentally regulated sites.
<b>Measurable Impacts?</b>	Mostly Trackable	All data available to track metrics. Data will be collected but is not specified whether it will be publicly available or acted on.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-Line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. No votes have been conducted yet.

## ENVIRONMENT: ESTABLISH CARBON REGISTRY

[HB 355](#) expands the existing voluntary carbon registry in Georgia, enabling the creation and tracking of carbon from construction projects in Georgia, and enabling the developers to sell these credits companies looking to offset their carbon footprint. Carbon credits can be accrued from the use of sustainable building products, such as CO<sub>2</sub>-infused concrete, mass timber, carbon-neutral flooring, and all wood products. Credits accrued will be determined and verified by an independent third-party. The registry would be Housed at the State Forestry Commission and participation in the registry would be voluntary. The measure also establishes a Sustainable Building Material Carbon Sequestration Technical Advisory Committee.

**Stage:** Signed/Enacted

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. A carbon registry is a positive step forward in standardizing and making public carbon use of companies. Scientists show the world's atmospheric <a href="#">carbon dioxide levels are increasing</a> by about five billion metric tons every year. This is the driver of climate change implications seen today.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Stakeholders include businesses that aim to shift toward a carbon-free future or seek to profit from their offsets. Environmental organizations such as <a href="#">Georgia Conservancy</a> support the bill. Since the carbon registry is voluntary, there has not been many negative stakeholder reactions.
<b>Reach</b>	Narrow Impact	Impacts narrow segment. The voluntary nature of this bill limits its' impact.
<b>Measurable Impacts?</b>	Complete Transparency	All data available to track metrics. A strength of this bill is the public record keeping of carbon by companies that participate and the opportunity to expand offset credits as profits.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Complete Consensus.	Passed. Less than five 'Nays'.



## ENERGY: CITY POWER SOURCES

[HB 150](#) bans local governmental entities from prohibiting the connection or reconnection of any public utility based upon the type of fuel or energy source. Bills similar to this were introduced in multiple states this year in response to some cities banning natural gas hook-ups in new construction, though no Georgia city has done so.

HB 150 preempts local control over power and utility sources disallowing them to respond to community needs. This legislation sets a precedence for other bills that may hinder innovation at the local level in response to localized community needs.

**Stage:** Signed/Enacted

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Does Not Utilize Science	<b>No</b> , this does not present scientific research accurately. HB 150 takes away the rights of local governments to decide how buildings are powered, leaving them subject to the state's decision. The science on climate change says that we should <a href="#">transition away from fossil fuels</a> to renewable sources, <a href="#">since coal, petroleum, and natural gas</a> account for majority of carbon emissions globally.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Negative	Majority of stakeholders <b>disagree</b> with the implications of the bill. The <a href="#">Georgia Conservancy</a> and <a href="#">Protect Georgia</a> opposed HB 150, as they support local communities' authority to explore their own solutions in the expansion and adoption of alternative energy sources. The bill was <a href="#">supported by Southern Company</a> who recently invested \$8 billion to buy Atlanta Gas Light company, a fossil fuel based energy source.
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	Affects all target audiences equally. All Georgia cities would be affected by this bill.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Mostly Trackable	A majority of the data exists and is accessible. Cities report their building energy sources and types.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Passed. Republican sponsored bill. 107 Yea, 52 Nay, 21 Other.

## ENVIRONMENT: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IMPACT STATEMENTS

[HB 431](#) will establish additional permit application requirements for new or expanded facilities that are located in overburdened communities, which the bill defines as communities that are low income, minority, or where community members have limited English proficiency. These new requirements include: the preparation of an environmental justice impact statement, the issuance of the environmental justice impact statement to the department and to the local government in which the community is located, and public hearings in the community.

**Stage:** Introduced

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. HB 431 requires preparation of an environmental impact statement prior to any new or expanded facilities in any overburdened communities (low income, minority, limited English proficiency), where polluting infrastructure has been historically placed. This would help to ensure these communities do not face additional environmental burdens.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Stakeholders include overburdened communities that could benefit from increased regulation to prevent pollution. Environmental organizations such as <a href="#">Protect Georgia</a> and <a href="#">Georgia Conservancy</a> support the bill.  The facilities of interest may oppose this bill because of the expanded time required to receive certification for new builds, but no public commentary has been found.
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	Affects all target audiences equally. All overburdened communities would be subject to environmental justice reviews.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Complete Transparency	All data available to track metrics. Environmental Impact statement will be available to the public.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. No votes have been conducted yet.

## ENVIRONMENT: PERMITS FOR LANDFILLS

[HB 557](#) revises limitations on new landfill permits. It prohibits permitting new landfills near significant groundwater recharge areas, prohibits permitting new landfills within 50 miles of existing landfills, requires a demonstration of need for any new proposed landfill, and provides a 2-mile buffer around landfills.

**Stage:** Introduced

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. HB 557 limits landfill impacts on neighboring communities and groundwater sources. Landfills, even well engineered ones, can cause air and water pollution. They contain high concentrations of chemicals, heavy metals and microbial life, which can seep into water systems. Further limiting landfills from significant groundwater recharge areas and adding additional two-mile buffers around landfills can help <a href="#">protect waterways and human health</a> .
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Stakeholders include communities already afflicted by landfills, who support increased regulations, and landfill companies. Environmental organizations such as <a href="#">Protect Georgia</a> and <a href="#">Georgia Conservancy</a> support this bill.  Landfill companies may not support increased regulation but have not made public comment.
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	Affects all target audiences equally. Protects overburdened communities from new landfills and requires new landfills to be further separated from the population.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Complete Transparency	All data available to track metrics. Public air and water quality <a href="#">data</a> can be used to track pollution.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Republican sponsored bill. No votes have been conducted yet.

## ENVIRONMENT: COAL ASH MONITORING

[HB 647](#) sought to codify existing state and federal rules that regulate the closure and post-closure monitoring and care of coal ash storage ponds. Post-closure care would take place for a minimum of 50 years following completion of the closure. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division must conduct inspections at least annually during the closure time period and at least once every five years following the completion of the closure. An executive summary must be included on the groundwater monitoring reports posted on the solid waste handling facility's website.

**Stage:** Crossed Over

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<p><b>Yes</b>, this does follow scientific research accurately. HB 647 extends the amount of time required for post-closure groundwater monitoring at coal ash disposal sites from 30 years to 50 years.</p> <p>Best practices dictate that <a href="#">Coal Ash must be properly stored to avoid harmful health and environmental effects on the surrounding community</a>. This bill does not change the requirements of how to store the Coal Ash, just how to monitor the Coal Ash storage. Thus, this bill is positive forward progress, but more needs to be done.</p>
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Environmental organizations such as <a href="#">Protect Georgia</a> , <a href="#">Georgia Conservancy</a> , and Georgia Water Coalition support the bill.
<b>Reach</b>	Narrow Impact	Impacts narrow segment. Requires extensive monitoring but little action.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Complete Transparency	All data available to track metrics. This bill requires additional monitoring and data to be collected on coal ash plants that are open or closed.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Complete Consensus	Republican sponsored bill. Less than five 'Nays'.

## ENVIRONMENT: FLOOD RISK REDUCTION

[HB 244](#) authorizes and extends the use of insurance premium tax revenue to flood risk reduction policies or projects. Enabling unincorporated areas of counties that are prone to experiencing floods to enact policies or projects such as: the creation of flood risk management strategies and plans, installation of stormwater management infrastructure, and acquisition of high-risk properties. Currently, these funds can also be used for police and fire protection, solid waste collection, and curbs, sidewalks, and streetlights.

**Stage:** Signed/Enacted

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. Science supports increased flood management strategies and plans. Coastal counties are already experiencing detrimental effects of sea level rise. Currently, in Georgia, <a href="#">12% of properties are at substantial risk of flooding</a> and this is predicted to increase by 10% over the next 30 years, one of the largest predicted increases in the country.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Stakeholders include those at flood risk in Georgia, and insurance companies who oftentimes pay for damages, both of which support increased flood risk reduction. Environmental organizations such as <a href="#">Protect Georgia</a> and <a href="#">Georgia Conservancy</a> support the bill.
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	Affects all target audiences equally. As a coastal state that is facing increased severe weather, flood risk management is beneficial for all Georgia residents.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Complete Transparency	All data available to track metrics. Flood data is collected and progress in risk management can be tracked by multiple organizations.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Complete Consensus	Republican sponsored bill. Less than five 'Nays'.

## ENVIRONMENT: SOIL AMMENDMENTS

[SB 260](#) eliminates local government ability to set buffers or setbacks of greater than 100 feet between soil amendment applications and nearby waterways or properties. A “soil amendment” is anything added to a soil to enhance it, such as fertilizer or nutrients. Additions of soil amendments are regulated by the Department of Agriculture.

This bill requires owners or operators of farms using soil amendments to create a site-specific nutrient management plan to be available upon request by the Department of Agriculture. It excludes industrial by-products generated solely by forest products, except for chemical by-products of pulp digestion, from the Department of Agriculture’s soil amendment regulation.

This bill is a roll back of House Bill 1057 from 2019.

**Stage:** Signed/Enacted

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Does Not Utilize Science	<b>No</b> , this does not present scientific research accurately. In recent years, neighbors across rural Georgia have been impacted by foul odors, flies and polluted runoff due to <a href="#">unwelcome sludge</a> in the name of soil amendments and fertilizers. This is distressing for most everyone, except the poultry processing produces. is the “soil amendments” are foul and the stench degrades the quality of life for those living near where it is applied. <a href="#">Untreated animal processing waste</a> contains bacteria and pathogens which can be harmful to humans and the environment.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Negative	Majority of stakeholders <b>disagree</b> . Environmental organizations such as <a href="#">Protect Georgia</a> and Sierra Club among others strongly oppose this bill. The supporters of this bill are those in the <a href="#">poultry industry that benefit</a> from more relaxed environmental regulation (they have to spend less money on disposal of waste).
<b>Reach</b>	Majority Impact	Impacts majority. Those that live near “soil abated” land are subject to odors and potential harmful bacteria and pathogens.
<b>Measurable Impacts?</b>	Limited Ability to Track.	Minimal amount of data exists and is accessible. Soil and groundwater samples are not routinely collected from farms or private properties that could be affected by the runoff.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Passed. 32 Yea, 14 Nay, 4 Other.



# ENVIRONMENT: RETAIL SINGLE USE PLASTIC BAN

[SB 104](#) would ban single use plastic bags and Styrofoam in retail establishments except for use in produce, trash, newspaper, and garment bags.

**Stage:** In Committee

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research. There is an environmental need to transition from plastic because it is harmful for wildlife and human health. Plastic production is predicted to quadruple from 2014 to 2050, and single use plastics are the most common type of plastic used. <a href="#">Single-use plastics</a> , like bags and Styrofoam, are a driving force in the plastic pollution. Most of this plastic ends up in landfills, clogging storm drains, or is carried down-river from watersheds across the state to our coast. Single-use plastics are now the most <a href="#">common pollution</a> found on our beaches, posing a significant threat to coastal birds, sea turtles, marine mammals, and other wildlife.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Many environmental organizations support plastic bans/taxes such as <a href="#">Protect Georgia</a> and the <a href="#">Georgia Conservancy</a> . <a href="#">Cities in Georgia</a> have enacted their own plastic legislation. However, some businesses oppose due to the effort and cost of shifting from plastic.
<b>Reach</b>	Majority Impact	Impacts majority; exceptions. All retail and restaurants would be subject to the ban, but there are exceptions for produce, trash, newspapers, and garment bags.
<b>Measurable Impacts?</b>	Complete Transparency	All data available to track metrics. Retail establishments could track cost-benefit tradeoff and change in waste collection could be measured state wide.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. No votes have been conducted yet.

## ENVIRONMENT: GOVERNMENT CAFETERIA PLASTIC BAN

[SB 224](#) is another plastic bill. It mandates all single-use and carry-out products (except for lids) that are sold, distributed, and provided at cafeterias operated by the Georgia Building Authority shall be paper based, shall not contain per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, and shall be commonly recyclable or compostable.

**Stage:** In Committee

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. <a href="#">Single-use plastics</a> , like bags and Styrofoam, are a driving force in the plastic pollution. Most of this plastic ends up in landfills, clogging storm drains, or is carried down-river from watersheds across the state to our coast. Many single use plastics contain plastics contain per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that are <a href="#">harmful to neurodevelopment and disrupt hormones</a> .
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . <a href="#">Protect Georgia</a> supports plastic reduction and several <a href="#">cities in Georgia</a> have enacted their own plastic legislation. However, there is opposition from some businesses due to a potential change in cost and new supply chains.
<b>Reach</b>	Majority Impact	Impacts majority; exceptions. This effects all cafeterias under the Georgia Building Authority, which serve policymakers, schoolchildren, and government employees.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Mostly Trackable	A majority of the data exists and is accessible. Cafeterias could track cost-benefit tradeoff and change in waste collection could be measured within the buildings.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. No votes have been conducted yet.

## HEALTH: GRACIE'S LAW

[HB 128](#) bill requires insurers to cover organ transplant costs for individuals who have a mental or physical disability. Prior to the passage of this bill, providers could deny individuals an organ transplant if they had a physical or mental disability.

**Stage:** Signed/Enacted

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. Many studies have confirmed that with adequate support, a person's disability status has very little impact on their ability to adhere to post-transplant care instructions or regimens. <a href="#">Studies</a> have also found that disability status does not have impact on whether the transplant is successful or not (if the transplant is unrelated to the individual's disability or health condition). <a href="#">A 2004 survey</a> revealed that only 52% of American patients with disabilities that requested a referral for organ transplant evaluation received one.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . This bill passed in the Georgia State Legislature with widespread, nearly unanimous bipartisan support. Physicians and other medical professionals in the U.S. have often been hesitant to approve or refer people with disabilities for organ transplants due to fear of increased complications and comorbidities compared to those who are not disabled.
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	Impacts all disabled Georgians equally. According to the CDC, <a href="#">27.2% of Georgians have some type of disability</a> . Between 800 and 1,000 organ <a href="#">transplants have been performed each year in Georgia</a> since 2011. Around <a href="#">25% of disabled adults</a> do not have health insurance in Georgia.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Complete Transparency	All data available to track metrics. Insured rates for those with disabilities who have had organ transplants, and the number of transplant procedures being performed on those with disabilities.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Complete Consensus	Bipartisan sponsored bill. Less than five 'Nays'.

## HEALTH: MENTAL HEALTH PARITY ACT

[HB 49](#), or the Mental Health Parity Act, would prevent insurers from differentiating between mental health claims and other health claims and would require them to treat all claims with equal priority.

**Stage:** Introduced

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. Mental health is an important part of overall health, and if untreated, <a href="#">leads to lost work, reduced economic opportunities, and physical health problems</a> . There is a stigma surrounding mental health and substance abuse disorders, and this extends to insurers and affects the way they treat patients and mental health claims. These issues are often dismissed, and companies will often refuse to cover mental health expenses. With the Covid-19 pandemic, mental health issues have <a href="#">increased</a> . From a scientific perspective, this bill would be beneficial in the long-term for an <a href="#">ever-increasing population</a> of people who need mental health services and might not receive them without the cooperation of insurance companies.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Stakeholders include those that have mental health claims, healthcare workers, and health organizations which support increased priority, and insurance companies, who may pay more for increased mental health claims.
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	Affects all target audiences equally. Georgia <a href="#">ranks 4th</a> in the nation in prevalence of mental health illness in 2020. Georgia received a failing grade for behavioral health parity according to a 2018 <a href="#">report</a> .
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Complete Transparency	All data available to track metrics. Insured rate for those with mental illness can be tracked and the number of individuals with mental illness.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. No vote has been conducted yet.

## HEALTH: TELEHEALTH OPTIONS

[HB 215](#) expands the use of telehealth options in the Medicaid program, makes permanent the legality of using telehealth options (which was granted on a temporary basis during the Covid-19 pandemic emergency), and provides for certification and training of providers of medical assistance via telehealth options. During the Covid-19 pandemic, telehealth emerged as extremely important in the healthcare landscape, especially for those in rural areas, and those with mobility issues due to a pre-existing condition, age, or lack of a personal vehicle.

**Stage:** Introduced

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<p><b>Yes</b>, this does follow scientific research accurately. The Georgia Department of Public Health provides telemedicine services to all counties. Nearly 2 million Georgians live in rural areas. The poverty rate in rural Georgia counties is <a href="#">7% higher than in urban counties</a>. <a href="#">Studies</a> have shown that access to telemedicine <a href="#">improves health outcomes</a>, which are measurable by chronic condition rates, hospital visit rates, and correlations between <a href="#">access to telehealth</a> through Medicaid and overall health status especially for those who are elderly or disabled.</p> <p>The expansion of Medicaid coverage during the pandemic to telehealth should not be removed even after the Covid-10 threat has diminished. Taking away this coverage would take away access to medical care and potentially result in bigger financial consequences later due to untreated or unmanaged illness or injury.</p>
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Stakeholders that support the bill include those healthcare providers that benefit from training on telehealth options, patients who can be cared for via telehealth that otherwise could not be. Medicaid and insurance providers may oppose because of increased costs.
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	Affects all target audiences equally. Increasing availability of telehealth options benefits all, especially those that cannot see healthcare providers otherwise.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Mostly Trackable	A majority of the data exists and is accessible. Impacts can be assessed by measuring chronic condition rates, hospital visit rates, and correlations between access to telehealth and overall health status especially for those who are elderly or disabled.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. No votes have been conducted yet.

## HEALTH: QUALITY EDUCATION ACT

[HB 195](#), also known as the Quality Education Act, mandates that any course of study in sex education and HIV/AIDs prevention instruction must be medically accurate. The term 'medically accurate' means complete information that is verified or supported by the weight of research conducted in compliance with accepted scientific methods; recognized as medically accurate and objective by leading professional organizations and agencies with expertise in the relevant field; and published in peer reviewed journals where appropriate.

**Stage:** Introduced

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. This provides for the modernization of HIV related laws to align with science to ensure that laws and policies support current understanding of best public health practices for preventing and treating HIV, scientific evidence about routes of transmission, and the public health goals of promoting HIV prevention and treatment.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Stakeholders include those teaching HIV/AIDS prevention, those working in public-health, and those living with HIV/AIDS.
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	Affects all target audiences equally. The target audience is those that study sex education and HIV/AIDS prevention instruction.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Limited Ability to Track	The success of the bill will be difficult to measure. However, teaching medically accurate information is invaluable and can lead to decreased stigmatization and discrimination of HIV.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. No vote has been conducted.



## HEALTH: HIV DE-CRIMINALIZATION

[SB 164](#) aligns HIV policies to follow current data and science, especially as it pertains to discrimination against those living with HIV. SB 164 requires prosecutors to prove that individuals charged with exposing someone to HIV had “intent to transmit” and posed “significant risk of transmission” based on current science. The bill removes criminal penalties for people living with HIV who share needles or donate blood. The proposal requires state law to refer to people as “living with HIV” rather than “HIV-infected people” - [people-first language](#) that is standard when talking about any person with a disability.

**Stage:** Crossed Over

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. This provides for the modernization of HIV related laws to align with science to ensure that laws and policies support current understanding of best public health practices for preventing and treating HIV, scientific evidence about routes of transmission, and the public health goals of promoting HIV prevention and treatment.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Stakeholders include those living with HIV, educators, and scientists, who support data-driven education.
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	Affects all target audiences equally. Target audience is those living with HIV.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Limited Ability to Track	The success of the bill will be difficult to measure. The overarching goal of this bill is to decrease stigmatization and discrimination of those living with HIV, which could be difficult to measure. Measuring those criminally penalized individuals could serve as a way to measure impacts.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Complete Consensus	Bipartisan sponsored. Less than five 'Nays'.

References: <https://www.projectq.us/georgia-senate-passes-bill-to-modernize-states-hiv-laws/>

## EDUCATION: FUNDING ADEQUATE INSTRUCTION IN RURAL GEORGIA GRANTS ACT

[HB 118](#) or the Funding Adequate Instruction in Rural (FAIR) Georgia Grants Act, provides more funding from the state government by expanding grants available to [fund schools](#) in rural areas.

The state government uses the Quality Basic Education (QBE) Act to determine the amount of funding a school district should have and calculates the share that the district will be required to pay. Property taxes fund a majority of school system budgets, and districts are expected to contribute by taxing at the minimum, \$5 for every \$1000 of property value. When the amount collected does not meet the minimum per child need, the State Board of Education distributes money from the Georgia State Budget to make up for the deficit. This is supposed to create parity between school districts.

Rural school districts often have small student enrollments and/or have low property tax values. They also have greater transportation and infrastructure expenses, reducing the amount of the budget they can spend on actual instruction. This bill will provide more funding for sparsity grants, which will fund isolated schools.

**Stage:** Introduced

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. <a href="#">Education</a> increases the chance for economic mobility and promotes learning.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . This bill will increase the quality of education for rural students. These school districts have <a href="#">higher educational expenses and lower tax bases</a> .
<b>Reach</b>	Majority Impact	<a href="#">40% of GA's population</a> lived in rural areas in 2020 – and this bill would impact all of the students living in those areas who attend public school.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Mostly Trackable	A majority of the data exists and is accessible. Rural areas in GA often miss out on opportunities due to lack of infrastructure and sparsity. The bill's effectiveness can be measured by comparing student achievement before and after the bill was enacted. This will be necessary because receiving more funding does not always give intended results. School districts will need to publicize its spending to prevent misuse.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. No votes have been conducted yet.

## EDUCATION: SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS LIVING IN POVERTY ACT

[HB 10](#) Support for Students Living in Poverty Act, has the potential to send up to \$344 million to school systems who serve students living in poverty. The existing Quality Basics Education (QBE) Act works to redistribute funds and increase parity between school districts. HB 10 would examine the existing QBE program weights and funding requirements and determine new funding distribution weights to increase educational programming for students living in poverty. Under HB 10, students in poverty would be defined to include students whose family unit is enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and/or the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, students who are experiencing homelessness, students in foster care or migrant students.

**Stage:** Introduced

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. In the United States, <a href="#">Georgia ranks 49th</a> in the education for students who live in poverty. <a href="#">42 states</a> provide <a href="#">additional funding</a> for students living in poverty.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Stakeholders include students, community leaders, and education reformers who support increased assistance. <a href="#">GBPI agrees</a> Georgia needs do more to compensate for high-poverty environments to do a better job educating its children, and to improve the prospects of its future workforce.
<b>Reach</b>	Majority Impacted	Affects target audience, students living in poverty, who attend public schools. .
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Complete Transparency	A majority of the data exists and is accessible. The number of students living in poverty can be measured.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. Vote has not yet been conducted.

## EDUCATION: UNLOCKING THE PROMISE WHOLE CHILD MODEL SCHOOLS ACT

[HB 201](#) would allow schools to be certified in following the [Whole Child Model](#). The Whole Child Model approach to educational learning believes that every child needs to meet some basic requirements to be successful in their education. Each child must be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Schools are encouraged to create an environment that cultivates these values.

The bill's passage may make Georgia schools more competitive nationally. It should increase the number of students who exit the school system workforce and/or college-ready, which will benefit GA's economy in the future.

**Stage:** Introduced

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. Research has shown that children that use federally funded out-of-school programs increases their chance of being successful in school. They are less likely to use <a href="#">drugs</a> and have <a href="#">classroom behavioral problems</a> .
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Stakeholders include educators and parents, who support child education success.
<b>Reach</b>	Majority Impacted	Affects all students in public schools, which include local charter schools, state charter schools, and state chartered special schools.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Complete Transparency	All data available to track metrics. Some research studies estimate the impact of such programs by comparing the success rate of students in these programs to the success rate of students not in these programs that use free and/or reduced lunch programs.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. No votes have been conducted yet.

# EDUCATION: RAISING MANDATORY EDUCATION AGE

[HB 155](#) raises the mandatory age children must be enrolled in school from 16 to 17 years old.

**Stage:** Introduced

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. Adolescents' brain development during this stage is not yet mature enough to make significant decisions. <a href="#">Teens are more likely to act impulsively, or act based on emotion</a> rather than reason. This is because the area that controls reasoning is not yet fully developed, but the part of the brain that controls emotion is developed. This explains one of the reasons why students will make irrational decisions. Although the brain is not fully developed at the age of 17, increasing the age limit decreases the chances of making poor decisions, such as dropping out of high school.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> based on the fact that adolescents are more likely to made impulsive, irrational, decisions. And leaving school early has a <a href="#">life-long, detrimental effects</a> .  Critics of the bill argue that mandating students to attend school could lead to disciplinary problems and be more costly for the government.
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	All target audience impacted equally. Affects all at-risk students.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Limited ability to track	The success of the bill will be difficult to measure. Georgia schools have seen increased graduation rates since 2012. The rate has increased from <a href="#">69.7% to 83.8% from 2012 - 2020</a> . There are a number of factors that affect the outcome of these graduation rates, which makes measuring success of the bill difficult to assess.  For example, although Georgia's graduation rate <a href="#">increased by 1% in 2020</a> , the graduation rate calculated was modified compared to previous years. Schools that are under the Comprehensive Support Improvement (CSI) and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) lists must demonstrate that students are able to meet certain requirements in the state's test assessments. Due to COVID-19, CSI statuses were not calculated since tests were not taken during the 2020 school year. Moreover, calculation of the graduation rate was modified for some students who have cognitive disabilities. Typically, <a href="#">graduation rates</a> are calculated by counting the number of students who receive a high school diploma within 4 years of entering high school and dividing this number by the total cohort in the graduating class. However, since 2020, the Department of Education allowed students with cognitive disabilities who graduate after more than 4 years of high school to be counted in the 4-year graduation requirement for tracking graduation rates.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. No votes have been conducted yet.

## EDUCATION: MANDATORY KINDERGARTEN

[HB 262](#) would mandate pre-kindergarten and kindergarten for all children living in Georgia. The age of compulsory school attendance would be lowered from six years old to four years old. Currently, it is not mandatory for children in Georgia to attend Kindergarten.

This bill would be funded by gradually reducing the budget for the prison system and redirecting those funds toward pre-K and K budgets.

**Stage:** Introduced

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. In Georgia, approximately 4,000 eligible children did not enroll in kindergarten in 2019. This contributes to Georgia's lower than average reading proficiency: <a href="#">two-thirds of Georgia third graders are not reading on the correct level</a> , which increases their risk of dropping out of school.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Unknown	There is little evidence of positive or negative stakeholder perception. This bill has been proposed in the past and not been passed.
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	Affects all target audience equally. Mandating all children to attend pre-kindergarten and kindergarten creates more equal opportunities among all.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Complete Transparency	A majority of the data exists and is accessible. The number of children enrolled in kindergarten is tracked, as well as data on reading proficiency.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. Vote has not yet been conducted.



## EDUCATION: GEORGIA RESIDENT IN-STATE TUITION ACT

[HB 120](#) would allow undocumented students who qualify for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) to pay in-state tuition to most Georgia public universities. Currently, an enrolled undocumented student pays out-of-state or international student rates, which are 3 to 4 times more than the resident tuition rate. However, this bill will not change the policy that [bars undocumented students](#) from attending the following University System of Georgia Schools: University of Georgia, Georgia Institute of Technology, or Georgia College and State University.

Many undocumented students qualify for the federal policy DACA, which allows undocumented students to work and travel (albeit limited). DACA students are immigrants who entered the US as minors with their parents; they had no choice to immigrate in the US. A federal regulation protects the education of these students and so they cannot be denied of a K-12 education (Plyer v. Doe, 1982). Currently, [less than 1% of college students](#) attending a GA public university are undocumented. Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama are the only states that ban undocumented students from attending some of their public universities and colleges.

**Stage:** In Committee

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. Higher education increases the chance for <a href="#">economic mobility</a> and promotes learning. DACA recipients continue to make <a href="#">positive and significant contributions</a> to the economy, including earning higher wages, which translates into <a href="#">higher tax revenue</a> and economic growth that benefits all Americans.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Human and immigrant rights groups, the Gwinnett County Public School District, and the businesses part of the Coalition of Refugee Services Agencies support this bill. They believe that undocumented students should be able to attend any college of their choosing, and that it is unfair to these students to pay out-of-state rates because of their immigration status.  Most human rights groups believe that although immigration is a complex topic, “DREAMERS” deserve to be recognized as Americans since they were not given a choice to migrate but were brought along by their families.  The Board of Regents argues that the three schools cannot admit undocumented students because their competitive acceptance rates allow only a percentage of applicants to be accepted. The regents say they are prioritizing legal residents in these schools.
<b>Reach</b>	Narrow Impact	Impacts narrow segment. <a href="#">10% of Georgia's population are immigrants. 4% of the state's population are estimated to be undocumented.</a> Less than 1% of college students attending a GA public university are undocumented. The exact number of potential beneficiaries are not known.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Complete Transparency	A majority of the data exists and is accessible. The percentage of undocumented students attending these three universities can be tracked by their DACA status. A comparison between the number of DACA recipients enrolled before and after passage of the bill will reveal the efficacy of the bill on undocumented students in GA.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. Vote has not yet been conducted.

## FOOD: HEALTHY FOODS AND FOOD DESERTS STUDY COMMITTEE

[SR 283](#) is a resolution that establishes a committee that would study policy approaches to addressing access to healthy foods and eliminating food deserts in Georgia, including tax and incentive changes and coordination opportunities with local governments.

**Stage:** Signed/Enacted

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. <a href="#">Two million Georgians</a> live in food deserts (lacking access to healthy and fresh foods). These food deserts primarily affect low-income communities and exist in both rural and urban areas.
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Stakeholders include those living in food deserts and without access to healthy food options, those working to eliminate food insecurity, those working in medical and social justice fields.
<b>Reach</b>	Narrow Impact	The advisory committee will study food deserts. <a href="#">Food insecurity effects 1 in 8 Georgians, and food deserts are a piece of the larger food insecurity puzzle</a> . Studying food deserts is a positive step and will provide further context needed to reduce the number of citizens affected by food insecurity.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Complete Transparency	A majority of the data exists and is accessible. The committee will collect data to inform Georgia food insecurity policy solutions.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Party-line Split	Democrat sponsored bill. Passed 42 Yeas, 2 Nays, 7 Excused.

## FOOD: FARMERS' MARKET AND PRODUCE TERMINAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY ACT

[HB 676](#), or the Georgia Farmers' Market and Produce Terminal Development Authority Act, establishes a legislative advisory committee that will study the economic viability and impact of the state's farmers' markets. This report will be used to establish a five-year plan to "maximize the public benefit of all farmers' market properties and ensures efficient and fiscally responsible operation of such markets."

**Stage:** Signed/Enacted

Criteria	Score	Assessment
<b>Scientific Merit</b>	Follows Science	<b>Yes</b> , this does follow scientific research accurately. Farmers markets stimulate local <a href="#">economies</a> , provide access to fresh and <a href="#">nutritious food</a> , support <a href="#">healthy communities</a> , and promote <a href="#">sustainability</a> .
<b>Stakeholder Perception</b>	Positive	Majority of stakeholders <b>agree</b> . Stakeholders include vendors at farmers' markets and famers' market attendees.
<b>Reach</b>	All Impacted	Affects all target audience equally. The advisory committee will study farmers markets to inform future action and impact of all farmers markets.
<b>Measurable Impacts</b>	Complete Transparency	All data available to track metrics. The committee will collect economic viability and impact of Farmer's markets.
<b>Political Feasibility</b>	Complete Consensus	Zero to five 'Nays'. Passed 166 Yeas, 3 Nays.

# SAMPLE RUBRIC

Every year there are hundreds of bills; herein we only evaluated a few. Below we present a sample rubric for you to utilize yourself when evaluating legislation.

Criteria	Variables			
<p><b>Scientific Merit</b></p> <p>Does it utilize scientific research accurately?</p>	<p><b>Follows Science</b></p> <p>Yes, this does follow scientific research accurately. Here's why....</p>		<p><b>Does Not Utilize Science</b></p> <p>No, this does not present scientific research accurately. Here's why....</p>	
<p><b>Stakeholder Perception</b></p> <p>Who is going to be impacted? Is it equitable? List stakeholders &amp; opinions.</p>	<p><b>Negative</b></p> <p>Majority of stakeholders disagree</p>		<p><b>Positive</b></p> <p>Majority of stakeholders agree</p>	
<p><b>Reach</b></p> <p>Does it reach its target audience?</p>	<p><b>No Impact</b></p> <p>No impact on target audience.</p>	<p><b>Narrow Impact</b></p> <p>Impacts narrow segment.</p>	<p><b>Majority Impact</b></p> <p>Impacts majority; exceptions.</p>	<p><b>All Impacted</b></p> <p>Affects all target audience equally</p>
<p><b>Measurable Metrics?</b></p> <p>We recommend looking at these 3 metrics. Is the data available and/or being measured?</p>	<p><b>No Ability to Track</b></p> <p>There is no data and it is not accessible</p>	<p><b>Limited Ability to Track</b></p> <p>A minimal amount of data exists and is accessible.</p>	<p><b>Mostly Trackable</b></p> <p>A majority of the data exists and is accessible</p>	<p><b>Complete Transparency</b></p> <p>All data available to track metrics</p>
<p><b>Political Feasibility</b></p> <p>Level of opposition and partisan disagreement.</p>	<p><b>Majority Opposed</b></p> <p>Majority disagreed, regardless of party.</p>	<p><b>Party-Line Split</b></p> <p>Vote along party-lines.</p>	<p><b>Majority in Favor</b></p> <p>Few dissenting votes.</p>	<p><b>Complete Consensus</b></p> <p>Less than five 'Nays'</p>