



Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning

BRIGHT FROM THE START

FY 2022  
ANNUAL  
REPORT





# Contents



<b>A Message from the Commissioner</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>About Us</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>By the Numbers</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Financial Highlight</b>	<b>5 - 6</b>
<b>Enhancing School Readiness</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Increasing Quality and Access</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Supporting Workforce Development</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Coordinating Services</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Technological Advancements</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Special Initiatives</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Executive Cabinet</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Board of Early Care and Learning</b>	<b>14</b>



## A Message from Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs

Dear Friends of DECAL,

Thank you for reading this report of the Department of Early Care and Learning's (DECAL's) accomplishments for State Fiscal Year 2022 (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022). To me, the data and numbers reported in this document are even more powerful when I remember that they represent programs and services that benefit REAL PEOPLE: children, families, and early care and education providers in Georgia.



Herein you'll learn the ways we focused our work on DECAL's goals of:

- Enhancing School Readiness
- Increasing Quality and Access
- Supporting Workforce Development
- Coordinating Services

And you'll also receive a transparent, high-level perspective on how we fairly managed federal, state, and private funds.

I'm proud of the work DECAL has done this year, and I acknowledge we could not have been successful without the dedicated child care providers who care for Georgia's children day in and day out; the valuable stakeholders who collaborate with us; DECAL's professional, committed, and flexible staff; the Board of Early Care and Learning that advises and supports our work; and Governor Kemp and other state policy makers.

If you have any questions or comments about items contained in this report or ideas of how DECAL can continue to serve Georgia's children, families, and early care and education community, contact me at [amy.jacobs@decalfga.gov](mailto:amy.jacobs@decalfga.gov).

Sincerely,

Amy M. Jacobs  
Commissioner

# About Us

## Mission

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning enhances children's early education experience to promote their academic, social-emotional, and physical development in partnership with families, communities, the early care and education industry, and stakeholders.



## Vision

Every child in Georgia will have access to high-quality early care and education regardless of family income or location.

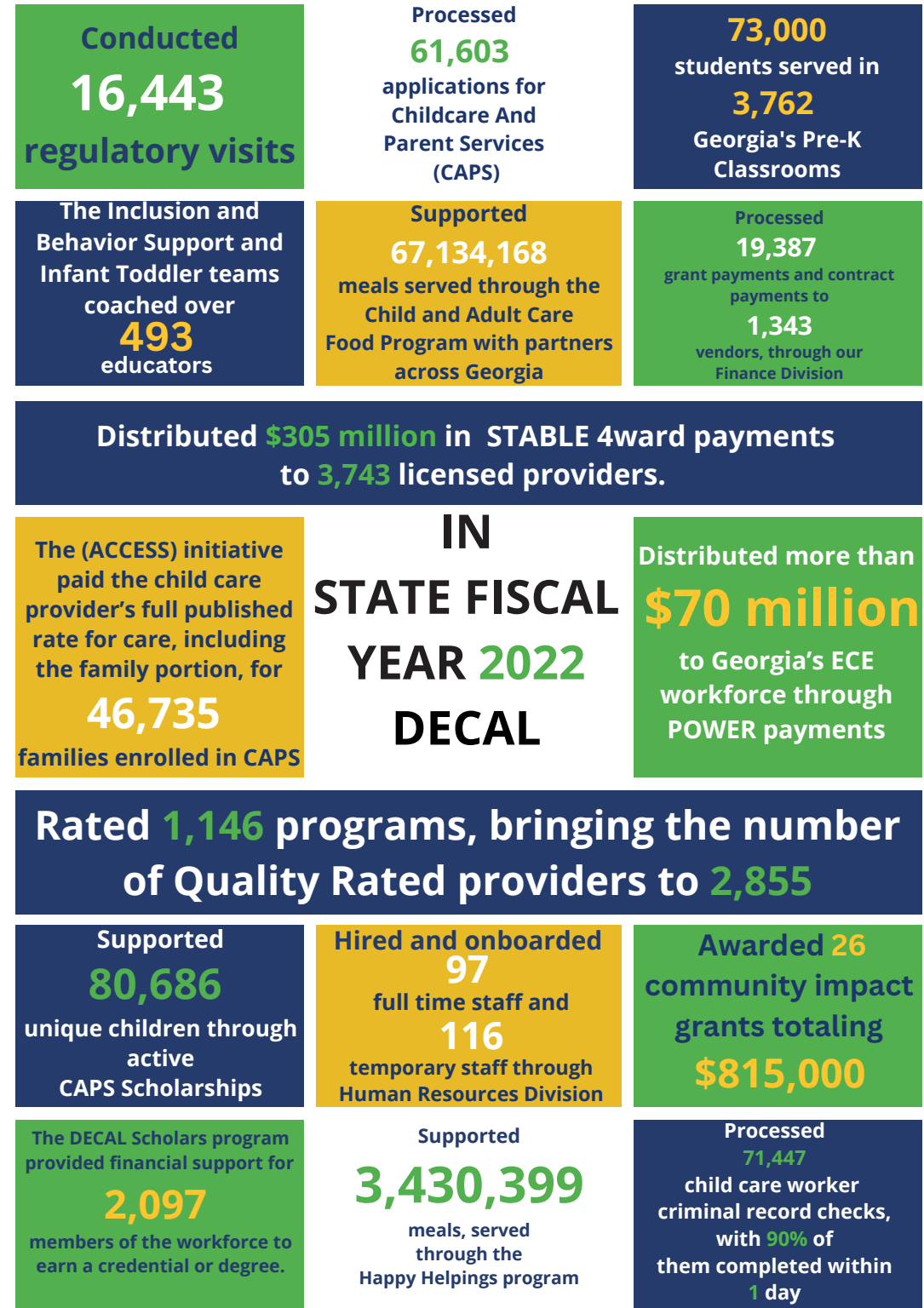
## Services

DECAL is the department of state government that supports child care providers in preparing Georgia's children and their families for school. Our services focus on quality child care, early education,

brain development, nutritional programs, and tools and resources for families. We work to equip early care and education professionals with enhanced credentials, appropriate teaching strategies, and best practices in working with children. We also collaborate with state policymakers and stakeholders to develop and implement policies that ensure access to quality care for all Georgia children.



# By the Numbers





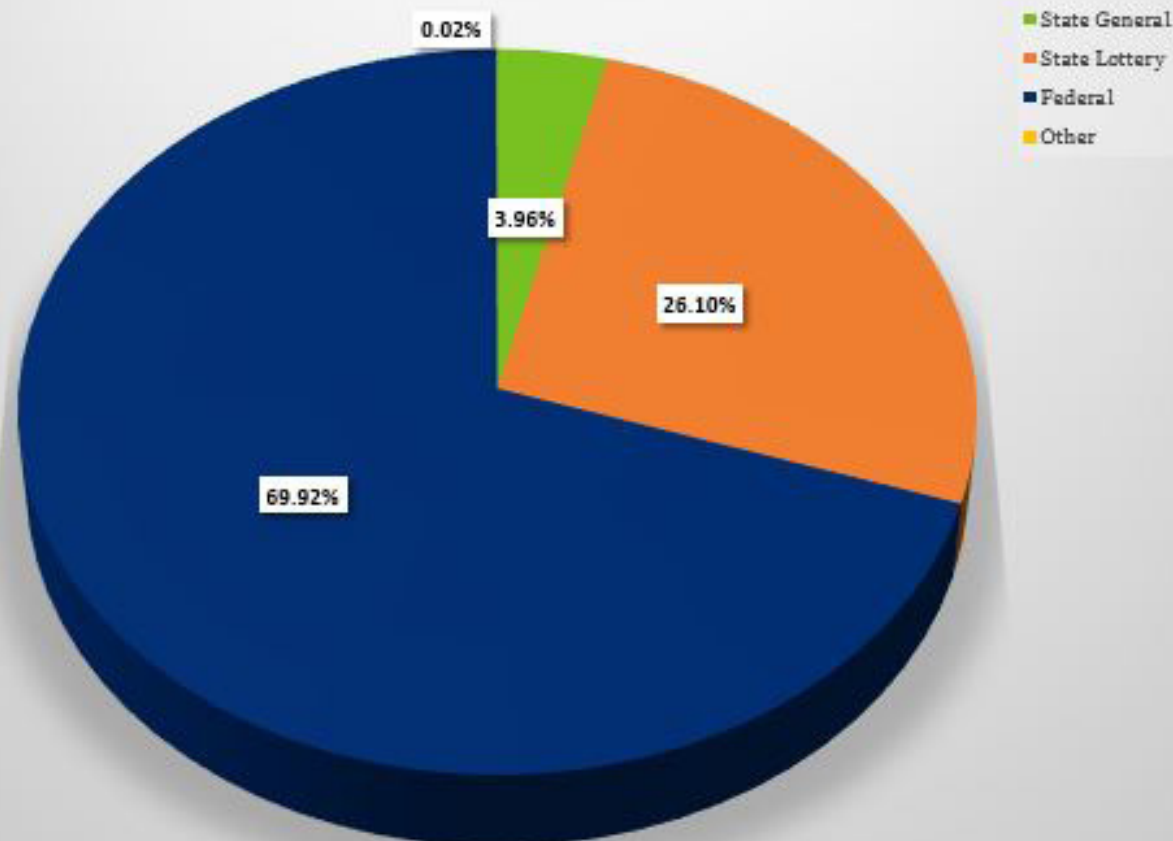
# Financial Highlights

## FISCAL YEAR 2022 BUDGET BY FUNDING SOURCE

State General	\$58,076,119
State Lottery	\$382,969,668
Federal	\$1,026,065,023
Other	\$351,254
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$1,467,462,064</b>

## DECAL APPROPRIATION BY FUNDING SOURCE

DECAL Appropriation by Funding Source



## FISCAL YEAR 2022 BUDGET BY PROGRAM

Child Care Services	\$877,115,557
Nutrition	\$155,330,935
Pre-K + (HS)	\$391,627,762
Quality Initiatives	\$43,342,810
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$1,467,462,064</b>

## FISCAL YEAR 2022 GRANTS

- **Preschool Development Birth to Five Renewal Grant: (\$3.7 million)** In the third year of the grant, funding from the Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five enabled DECAL to design and implement activities to help ensure that Georgia's children from birth to age five have equal access to high quality early childhood care and education. Although all children and families in Georgia benefit, the activities in the grant target children and families from vulnerable and underserved populations.
- **Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grant: (\$3.8 million a year for five years; currently in year four)** The Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grant provides infants, toddlers, and their families access to high-quality early education and comprehensive services by funding Early Head Start programs in child care learning centers and family child care learning homes.
- **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Implementation, Research, and Evaluation Grant: (\$250,000 a year for five years; currently in final year)** Funding from the CCDBG Implementation Research and Evaluation Grant is enabling DECAL to create a plan (including studies, surveys, evaluations, etc.) to determine how effectively and efficiently the state is using the grant funds.
- **Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Language and Literacy of Georgia College and State University Grant (SDD Center): (\$253,500)** Grant funds awarded by the SDD Center enabled DECAL to award grants to child care programs to implement the LITTLE ((Lifting Infants and Toddlers Through Language-rich Environments)program which supports teachers in developing critical early language and literacy skills in young children.
- **USDA Farm to School Grant: (\$60,808 for three years; currently in final year)** As the only state in the USDA's Southeast Region to focus solely on Farm to Early Care & Education for 0-5 year olds, Georgia will use this to help strengthen Farm to ECE programming across Georgia. Grant initiatives for the first year have been transitioned from in-person experiences to virtual platforms. Farm to ECE events will include: a Farm to School and Early Care & Education Summit on serving locally grown foods and implementing related educational activities; a Vendor Summit to connect vendors and farmers with CACFP program operators to increase opportunities for serving healthy, fresh, local foods; and a Farm to ECE 101 Training. Overall, this grant will allow DECAL and its community partnerships to build on Georgia's Farm to ECE foundations for improving access to local foods in Georgia.
- **State Funding for Nutrition Services (\$300,000):** Initiative to provide start-up grants to expand the Happy Helpings - Summer Food Program to serve meals for youth in unserved or underserved Georgia counties.



# Enhancing School Readiness

## Goal: Contribute measurably to school readiness for children birth to age five

Enrollment in **Georgia's Pre-K Program** increased to more than 73,000 children in the 2022 school year.

**Georgia Pre-K** Week was celebrated (virtually and in-person) in October to raise awareness about the state's preschool program. Record-breaking highlights included: More than 850 Pre-K sites in 131 counties across Georgia participated; 33 community partners engaged in the event; eight members of Georgia's congressional delegation directly participated in the event by video or social media (the highest number ever).



To minimize the impact of the pandemic on school readiness, DECAL's Summer Transition Program offered **71 classes** for Rising Pre-K students and **131 classes** for Rising Kindergarten students. The six-week program served approximately **4,000 children**.



As an **Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership** grantee, DECAL delivered Early Head Start services (ie., health, early education, nutrition, mental health, disability, and family support) to **208 infants and toddlers**.

# Increasing Quality and Access

## Goal: Increase the number of high-quality, affordable child care programs statewide, thereby improving access and better addressing the needs of all children

During FY 2022, **Child and Parent Services'** (CAPS) and Quality Rated's requirement that all child care providers who are eligible to become quality rated, have achieved their star rating or are actively pursuing a rating with a probationary or provisional status has been met. By the end of June 2022, 62,703 children, 93% of all children with a CAPS scholarship, were enrolled in Quality Rated care. Also, 2,326 providers serving children with CAPS scholarships were Quality Rated.

In calendar year 2022, DECAL restructured its **Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership** grant, bringing the required comprehensive services in house. The Early Head Start team expanded from four to 10.



Using **American Rescue Plan** (ARP) funding, DECAL expanded the Community Transformation Grant program by awarding 18 new grants this year.

DECAL reworked Georgia's **Cross-Agency Child Data System** (CADS), culminating in a new website.

CAPS added "**student parents**" as a priority group to support parents furthering their educational goals and to address child care as a commonly reported barrier to educational attainment.

To help support families and child care providers, CAPS continued the **ACCESS** (Awarding Child Education Scholarship Supplements) initiative, paying the child care provider's full published rate for care, including the family portion. To date, 46,735 CAPS families and 3,165 child care providers have benefited from ACCESS.

To increase access to **high-quality early learning experiences** for Georgia's families, CAPS raised income limits for program eligibility to serve 10,000 more children raising the total children served to 60,000.

DECAL's **Inclusion and Behavior Support** (IBS) Unit supported early learning childhood educators and families in fostering children's social emotional development through resources, training, and coaching. The SEEDS for Success Helpline responded to more than 794 requests from teachers, providers, and families. In addition, IBS specialists coached 309 educators in implementing strategies that promote inclusive, positive classroom environments.

Through the **LITTLE grant program** (Lifting Infants and Toddlers Through Language-rich Environments), DECAL's Infant Toddler team supported 32 early learning programs, 62 classrooms, and 182 educators in implementing responsive caregiving strategies that promote early language and literacy development. Funding from the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy supported this work.



# Supporting Workforce Development

**Goal: Develop, engage, and retain a capable, well trained, and effective workforce for the early care and education industry and for DECAL**

**Child Care Services (CCS)** created nine online training modules for CCS staff and providers.

CCS provided 629 hours of onboarding training to 17 new CCS staff, and 294 hours of training to CCS veteran staff. They also provided 359 **technical assistance visits to child care providers** for compliance improvement and 96 training sessions for 1,672 teachers and staff.

The Georgia Association for Infant Mental Health (GA-AIMH) was established to serve as Georgia's **professional development hub** to provide the early childhood workforce with infant and early childhood mental health core competencies and other relevant training.

The **DECAL Scholars** program awarded approximately \$2.3 million in financial support to help 2,097 unique participants earn a degree or credential.

The **POWER (Providing Our Workforce Essential Recognition) program** provided more than \$70 million in supplemental payments to individuals in the early care and education workforce.

The number of users in the **Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS)** increased 14% for a total of 159,227 users.

DECAL organized and supported 68 **Peer Support Network** sessions for providers participating in or interested in becoming Quality Rated.

The **Georgia Training Approval** unit approved 1,035 trainings.

The **Online Learning Library Initiative (OLLI)** expanded the number of online trainings available to the early learning workforce and DECAL staff to 71 trainings.

The **Professional Learning Community (PLC) Training Initiative** certified 60 PLC facilitators.



# Coordinating Services

**Goal: Build a framework that aligns and coordinates DECAL programs and services across regions for children from birth to age eight**

In partnership with the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and Prevent Child Abuse Georgia, CAPS launched **Find Help Georgia**, a new resource and referral portal shared across agencies and organizations that provides one online location where families can access a comprehensive directory of local resources.

DECAL's **Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH)** Taskforce, composed of representatives from several child and family serving agencies, has increased access to early childhood mental health services for young children and their families struggling with mental health issues. The IECMH Taskforce created an early childhood mental health provider toolkit to support mental health practitioners working with young children and their families to effectively bill Medicaid.

DECAL's network of **Family Peer Ambassadors** shared information about child development, developmental milestones, Quality Rated, CAPS, and other critical early childhood services with more than 2,253 Georgia families.



# Technological Advancements

## **DECAL's IT team supported the agency's FY 2022 achievements toward its goals through improvements in applications, security, and infrastructure.**

### **KOALA Applications:**

- Processed the POWER supplemental payments Rounds 2 and 3 distributing more than \$78 million to child care workers in Georgia
- Completed development for STABLE 4ward quarterly reporting and collected data from three quarters
- Completed ACF-901 federal reporting for STABLE 4ward funding
- Completed online refutation processing with CCS management tracking
- Completed required reports for exempt providers eligible for CAPS funding

### **Quality Rated**

- Processed the POWER supplemental payments Rounds 2 and 3 distributing more than \$78 million to child care workers in Georgia
- Completed development for STABLE 4ward quarterly reporting and collected data from three quarters
- Completed ACF-901 federal reporting for STABLE 4ward funding
- Completed online refutation processing with CCS management tracking
- Completed required reports for exempt providers eligible for CAPS funding

### **CACDS**

- Developed CACDS 3.0 to modernize the website and to provide users more relevant information with business intelligence dashboards and a content management system to streamline the maintenance and website enhancement process.

### **PANDA**

- Implemented a password expiration enhancement to increase security of the PANDA system. The change requires all passwords to conform to industry standards in terms of length and complexity and requires users to change their passwords every 90 days.
- Automated the Teacher Waiver request process

### **ATLAS**

- Migrated the ATLAS application to the Azure cloud platform making the application more stable, scalable, and reliable

### **GAPDS:**

- Implemented the optimization redesign that significantly increased performance and eliminated system timeouts
- Deployed a Search by Language function to enable Spanish speaking users to find Online Learning Library Initiative (OLLI) trainings in Spanish more easily
- Enhanced password credentials and implemented a reset feature

# Special Initiatives

- Launched the Clean Water for Georgia Kids Program with Georgia Department of Education and RTI International Research
- Developed and deployed the new family friendly licensing dashboard, Compliance at a Glance, on [qualityrated.org](http://qualityrated.org) and [decals.ga.gov](http://decals.ga.gov)
- Launched and delivered COVID-19 test kit and PPE grants
- Celebrated Quality Rated's Tenth Anniversary
- Celebrated Georgia's Pre-K Program's 30th Birthday (2022-2023 school year)
- Audits – Developed and Implemented audit processes for STABLE payments made to providers to ensure accountability in the distribution of funds
- Nutrition - Rebranded DECAL's Summer Food Service Program to Happy Helpings and launched new Happy Helpings website- [www.happyhelpingsga.com](http://www.happyhelpingsga.com)
- Expanded mission of the Division to highlight the importance of physical activity and evidence-based obesity prevention strategies in early care settings which included hiring a new Nutrition Education Specialist and Physical Activity Specialist
- Awarded start-up grants totaling \$195k to Happy Helpings Sponsors to expand access to meals in 12 counties that were underserved in FY21. Nearly 30,000 meals were served at 27 meal sites as a result of the start up grants
- Enterprise Project Management – DECAL created STABLE 4ward to help stabilize the cost of maintaining child care programs by supporting the child care workforce, reducing the financial burden of child care for families and ensuring a safe and healthy environment using ARPA funds. DECAL awarded \$890 million in STABLE 4ward funds to 3,743 licensed child care programs, 86% of all programs, operating in Georgia.
- Developed a strategic plan for DECAL's child care cost model to implement a plan of continuous improvement for the model that will allow DECAL to be more informed when making policy decision in the future
- Developed a child care supply and demand data model to allow DECAL to perform a more integrated and up-to-date analysis related to the possible demand for child care and the corresponding supply of public and private child care services available to families in Georgia.





# DECAL Executive Cabinet

**Susan Adams**  
Deputy Commissioner  
for Pre-K & Instructional  
Supports  
404-656-5957  
Susan.Adams@decals.ga.gov

**Dennis Brice**  
Chief Information Officer  
404-656-5957  
Dennis.Brice@decals.ga.gov

**Reg Griffin**  
Chief Communications Officer  
404-656-5957  
Reg.Griffin@decals.ga.gov

**Elisabetta Kasfir**  
Deputy Commissioner  
for Federal Programs  
470-657-5583  
Elisabetta.Kasfir@decals.ga.gov

**Dr. Bentley Ponder**  
Deputy Commissioner  
for Quality Innovations & Partnerships  
404-656-5957  
Bentley.Ponder@decals.ga.gov

**Rian Ringsrud**  
Deputy Commissioner  
for Finance & Administration  
404-656-6333  
Rian.Ringsrud@decals.ga.gov

**Pam Stevens**  
Deputy Commissioner  
for Child Care Services  
404-657-5562  
Pam.Stevens@decals.ga.gov

**Ira Sudman**  
Chief Legal Officer  
404-656-5957  
Ira.Sudman@decals.ga.gov



# Board of Early Care and Learning

**Phil Davis, Savannah**  
First Congressional District  
(Chair)

**Susan Harper, Albany**  
Second Congressional District

**Kathy Howell, Carrollton**  
Third Congressional District  
(Secretary)

**Karla Zisook, Decatur**  
Fourth Congressional District

**VACANT**  
Fifth Congressional District

**Kristy Beam, Atlanta**  
Sixth Congressional District

**Kristin Morrissey, Cumming**  
Seventh Congressional District

**Luann Purcell, Ed.D.,  
Warner Robins**  
Eighth Congressional District

**Cristina Washell, Ed.D., Cleveland**  
Ninth Congressional District

**Joanna Hill, Watkinsville**  
Tenth Congressional District

**Jen Bennecke, Atlanta**  
Eleventh Congressional District

**Kimberly Neville, Brooklet**  
Twelfth Congressional District

**Melissa Boekhaus, M.D., Smyrna**  
Thirteenth Congressional District

**Debra Brock, Calhoun**  
Fourteenth Congressional District  
(Vice Chair)







# Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning

BRIGHT FROM THE START

**Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning  
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE  
754 East Tower  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334**

**404-656-5957  
1-888-442-7735**

**[www.decal.ga.gov](http://www.decal.ga.gov)**