Laws That Will be Effective on July 1st

By: Senator Ben Watson (R – Savannah)

July 1st marks the beginning of a new fiscal year and the implementation of many of the bills we passed this session that were signed into law by Governor Brian Kemp. This year, there are several new laws that you should know about as they could have a direct impact on your life. These laws are the result of many years of hard work by legislators, citizens and advocates and we are all anxious to see the positive effect they will have on your lives. Below we detail some of these new laws and the impact they will have:

Healthcare Legislation becoming effective on July 1, 2019:

As the new Senate Health and Human Services Committee Chairman, I was responsible for overseeing legislation that was assigned to this committee. This resulted in giving 27 bills a “do pass” recommendation over the course of the 2019 legislative session. Some of those bills are effective already, some will become effective July 1st, and others won’t be effective until next year. Here are some of the pieces of legislation, both healthcare related and otherwise, that will take effect on Monday:

- Senate Bill 16 authorizes the Georgia Composite Medical Board to administer the Georgia Interstate Medical Licensure Compact. The new law allows doctors who have a clean disciplinary record to be eligible for an expedited licensure process to practice medicine in Georgia. States entered into the Compact are able to share information with each other regarding the doctor’s disciplinary record and background check information, ensuring our state is allowing the best doctors to participate in this program.

- Senate Bill 18 allows physicians to provide health care to a patient through a direct primary care agreement without being subject to insurance regulations. A direct primary care agreement allows a patient to directly contract with a doctor, without insurance. For example, you might pay a doctor a set amount for unlimited visits a month. This is generally used for primary care visits and would not be used for emergency visits. This is an alternative to insurance for some, and I think this could help encourage more doctors to practice medicine, particularly in rural parts of our state.

- Senate Bill 184 requires state employee health insurance plans to pay for services provided by federally qualified health centers at the same rates as Medicare. This provision excludes licensed group health maintenance organizations with exclusive medical contracts.

- House Bill 39 enters Georgia into the Physical Therapy Licensure Compact to facilitate the licensure of physical therapists who are members of one of the 21 compact member states. Additionally, HB 39 allows the State Board of Physical Therapy to conduct a background check on those applying for a license.

- House Bill 62 requires health care facilities that conduct mammograms to notify the patient when their results show dense breast tissue. Additionally, HB 62 requires the mammogram results summary to include information regarding next steps and the reason for notification. I
know that this is a bill a lot of folks from our district were passionate about as Margie Singleton is a resident of Savannah. I look forward to the life-saving information this bill will give to women in Georgia.

- House Bill 217 exempts syringe services programs from civil and criminal liability for possession, distribution and exchange of hypodermic syringes and needles, regardless of knowledge of its drug-related use.