

DCH Team,

As customary with this time of year, much of our activity over the past six weeks has been focused on the legislative session. Over three weeks ago, we presented DCH's proposed budgets to the Joint House and Senate Appropriations Committee to kick off the budget hearings. More recently, we've presented in each of the House and Senate subcommittees regarding the proposed amended FY24 budget and the FY25 budget.

As an agency with a projected budget exceeding \$19 billion in state and federal funds, we continue to be appreciative of the Governor's Office, the Office of Planning and Budget as well as the House and Senate budget staff for their collaboration in working through our budget requests. I'd also like to thank Joe Hood, Cody Whitlock, Brian Lipton and Rachel Lemoine, who were instrumental in preparing me for these conversations.



As I mentioned in our prior edition, the agency is promoting six legislative proposals this session. All six are moving through the committee process, and I'd like to thank Brandy Sylvan, Kaitlin Ward and each of our subject matter experts who continue to contribute toward this effort. Legislators serve as bill sponsors on each bill, and we've received favorable committee assignments on all these matters.

We appreciate all the heart going into these legislative efforts, which is timely because as you may know, February is American Heart Month. According to the American Heart Association, heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States – and this has been true for the past 100 years straight since 1921! I hope you will pay special attention to the messages from our SHBP and Communications teams regarding the importance of cardiovascular health. Take these messages to heart, and make self-care and wellness a part of your routine every day.

Be sure to review other interesting information in this edition – from exercising vigilance in cybersecurity to our new HFRD recruiting video – we demonstrate that we are an agency continually working for the benefit of our constituents.

Before I close, let me take a moment to acknowledge February as Black History Month. Black history is a part of American history, and I appreciate and acknowledge the contributions of our team members for their work in this agency and in our communities through public service. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, "Everybody can be great because everybody can serve."



Thank you, DCH team, for all your support. Let's continue to make a difference in the lives of the Georgia citizens we serve daily.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Paul Cook". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.