



2024 SPARK Legislative Session Wrap-Up

Hey y'all! Thanks for hanging with us during this 2024 legislative session. It was absolutely a rollercoaster ride, but we held on and made it to the end! Join us in recapping this legislative session and celebrating the wins.

The legislative process can be extremely confusing. Each bill must go through each chamber, the house and the senate, and it must pass through the chamber it was introduced in by “crossover day”. If they are not successful by crossover day, they ‘die’ and somewhat leave our radar. There is a bit of a loophole, legislators are able to sometimes revive these bills, through “zombie bills”, and attach them to bills that are moving through the process. We saw this many times this session, up until the last hours of the session. The last day of session, Sine Die, is the final deadline for legislators to get their bills passed. After a bill is passed through each chamber, they are sent to the Governor to be signed into law and if signed, most bills will go into effect July 1st. The Governor also has power to veto a bill and choose not to enact the bill into law.

At the beginning of the session we introduced our [legislative agenda](#). In this, we outline the issues that are important to us and the goals we are hoping to achieve through our work at SPARK. During this session, many of our goals were challenged and we discuss some of those below!

SPARK is dedicated to Queer and Trans Liberation, Abolishing Anti-Blackness and Protect Trans Young People.

SPARK works toward Queer and Trans Liberation, works to abolish anti-Blackness and uplifts anti-racism. We also work to protect Trans young people. This legislative session did its best to work against liberation, but many of these bills were unsuccessful. There were many anti-trans bills that would directly affect Trans youth. There was a bill introduced to ban Trans students from playing sports, bathroom bans were introduced, and late in the session there was a bill introduced to ban puberty blockers. These bills failed to make it to the crossover day

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threshold but were later revived as “zombies” and attached to a bill that was moving through. The carrier bill was originally for promoting mental health advocacy among student athletes and these amendments were added without the original sponsor’s consent. That bill ultimately failed to pass before sine die, killing the anti-Trans bills as well as the mental health portion of the bill.

The ‘Religious Freedom Restoration Act’, RFRA for short, was introduced and it aimed to allow for discrimination on the basis of religion. This bill would have caused many harms, specifically to the Trans community seeking medical care. The RFRA also failed this session in Georgia but has been gaining traction around the country and we are likely to see it introduced again.

Legislators were busy at the latter end of session promoting racist ideologies. Using a tragic event to promote anti-immigration sentiment, legislators organized a bill essentially allowing discrimination based on a person's immigration status. HB 1105 requires local law enforcement to identify persons they think may be in the country undocumented. This forces entanglement with ICE and increases racial profiling and targeting of communities of color. This bill also allows collection of DNA of people in custody, charged with misdemeanors, and suspected of being undocumented. This is not at all the standard practice and sets a dangerous tone.

SPARK works to increase Abortion Access and work toward Reproductive Justice.

A key fight of SPARK is increasing abortion access and working toward Reproductive Justice, including increasing IVF access. This did not seem to be a key issue for legislators this session. On the reproductive front, we had our Reproductive Freedom Act, a bill aimed at increasing abortion access in Georgia. Unfortunately, this bill did not move this session, but we were able to get quite a few new legislators to sign on to support this bill. We spent a day at the Capitol talking to legislators and thanking them for their support of the RFA and will continue to promote it in our fight for reproductive justice. There was a bill to approve more hours

permitted for paid parental leave for some public officers and employers, HB 1010, and made it through both chambers and is on its way to Governor Kemp's office! Another bill we monitored, HB 1037, was supposed to create a maternal and infant health commission. We were mostly in support of this bill, but we were hesitant because we were unsure of who would be appointed to this commission, and we need to take action rather than creating another watching board. This bill did not pass.

SPARK supports Abolition of the prison industrial complex.

SPARK staunchly supports abolition and works at dismantling all the structures that uphold this system. Early in the session, an extremely regressive bill relating to bail passed out of both chambers. This bill, [Senate Bill 63](#), required bail be assigned for more offenses as well as criminalizes bail fund organizations. Under this new bill, no organization will be able to post bail more than 3 times a year. The next step in reforming the system, until we can get rid of it, is bail reform and this bill completely contradicts what we need. SPARK opposes this bill and all the harms this will cause to an already over-incarcerated state.

SPARK supports Comprehensive Sexual Education.

SPARK also supports comprehensive sexual education. Legislators moved in this space quite a bit this session, both against sex ed and working to slightly improve the curriculum. There was a bill that would eliminate any type of sexual education before 5th grade and allow schools the opportunity to opt out of all types of sexual education. Another bill was pushing a health course on pregnancy and "human development" and there was no option for parents to opt out. This piece of legislation was vague and was not mandated to be medically accurate. Both bills failed this session. There were also many bills dealing with library books and a bill that could criminalize librarians, placing a higher burden on libraries and librarians. Fortunately, these were unsuccessful. There was a bill that aimed at promoting teachings of sexual health and STI and HIV prevention and required that teachings regarding health had to be medically accurate and "age appropriate". We were in favor of this bill, but it also failed this session.

All in all, many of the bills we were most concerned about were stopped. To see a comprehensive list of the bills we monitored during session please see our [legislative tracker](#). The end of the legislative session does not mean the end of our work. SPARK is working on a fertility access campaign with the goal of increasing fertility access in Georgia. As we continue working on this campaign, we will need support from our base members to speak with their legislators and promote our campaign. It is also important to stay in the know! Election primaries are coming up on May 21st. Research the candidates in your district and decide what's the best option for you! Stay informed on national trends, these will help indicate what Georgia may be facing next session. As always, stay tapped into SPARK's socials!

In solidarity,

SPARK RJ NOW!