

GJP's 2025-26 Legislative Session Wrap-Up

Georgia Justice Project works to reduce the number of Georgians under correctional control and remove barriers to reentry for formerly justice-involved individuals. Our experience representing clients and supporting returning citizens informs our policy work. We successfully advocated for four bills this session.

PASSED 2026: OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING (SB 207): Fair Chances for Sustainable Careers

- Beginning July 2027, a pre-determination process will allow job seekers to learn if their background is disqualifying or not before investing in education and training.
- More than 40 licensing boards have increased guidance on what records are relevant for applications.
- Establishes due process protections for individuals who apply for an occupational license.

PASSED 2026: FIRST OFFENDER ACT MODERNIZATION (HB 162): A True Second Chance

- Improves how the First Offender Act functions in the digital age by requiring the sealing of new case records at sentencing, as well as active and successfully completed first offender sentences, to prevent barriers to opportunity.

PASSED 2026: ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY INCARCERATION (HB 535): Count Time-Served Consistently

- Requires time-served in jail awaiting a probation revocation hearing to be treated the same as time-served waiting for an adjudication of guilt in a new case.
- Restores longstanding practice that was changed by *Kellum v. State*, 367 Ga. App. 742 (2023).

PASSED 2025: SURVIVOR JUSTICE ACT (HB 582): Stops the Criminalization of Survivors

- Georgia passed one of the most comprehensive laws to prevent survivors of domestic violence and child abuse from suffering harsh penalties for conduct related to their own survival.
- Reduces the likelihood that survivors will be convicted or receive a long sentence going forward and allows for resentencing for those currently serving a sentence.
- HB 582 also created evidentiary protections to enable victim-centered programs like restorative justice.

LOOKING AHEAD: POLICY & IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES for 2027-2028

- **Court Notices:** Reduce unnecessary license suspensions, warrants, and incarceration by increasing court appearances through evidence-based text reminders and effective court notices.
- **Record Clearing:** Expand eligibility to make the law work for more Georgians facing barriers to opportunity due to old felony conviction records, increasing access to employment.
- **Survivor Justice:** Represent incarcerated survivors seeking re-sentencing. Provide training and technical assistance to defense attorneys and other stakeholders.
- **Occupational Licensing:** Develop educational resources and training for potential licensing applicants, licensing boards, and educators about the new processes that will take effect July 2027.
- **Early Termination of Probation:** Continue to support the implementation of this 2021 law to ensure it's being utilized effectively and equitably by courts and probation offices.

For more info, visit [GJP.org/advocacy](https://www.gjp.org/advocacy) or contact Ann Colloton at Ann@GJP.org.