



2026 REGULAR LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The 2026 Regular Session has come to a close, and with adjournment comes the time to step back and assess progress on Ellevate’s policy priorities in the broader Louisiana context.

The session was defined by several major debates around healthcare, workforce development, higher education funding, teacher pay, economic development, and industrial competitiveness.

Budget pressures and financial constraints guided this session, with the May 6 Revenue Estimating Conference projections dimming some optimism and necessitating budget renegotiations in the Senate.

Another shakeup to session came with the May 16 election. This was the first election with Louisiana’s new closed primary system in play, and voters rejected all five constitutional amendments on the ballot. Primary runoffs will take place on June 27.

Significant – in fact, historical – debates also occurred around redistricting and elections. After the Supreme Court’s Louisiana v. Callais decision release caused Governor Landry to issue Executive Order 26-038 suspending U.S. House primary elections, concerns circulating around voter confusion were amplified. The Callais decision simultaneously kicked off redistricting hearings, with the map in SB121 (Morris) favoring Republicans at a 5-1 advantage ultimately being adopted after passing the Senate 27-10 and the House 66-36.

Throughout session, Ellevate has tracked legislation, engaged with stakeholders, advocated for policies aligned with our positions, and worked to ensure women’s voices – as well as the no party voters which make up about 30% of our electorate – were heard.

This year, legislative filings included:

- 1,259 House Bills
- 403 House Resolutions and 120 House Concurrent Resolutions
- 525 Senate Bills
- 195 Senate Resolutions and 87 Senate Concurrent Resolutions

The Governor’s veto period lasts ten days following adjournment, but **410 bills** have become law.

See below for more information on legislative movement under each of our policy areas.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & K-12

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

As one of over 200 organizations in the [Ready Louisiana Coalition](#), Ellevate continues to advocate for sustained, recurring investment in early childhood education and expanded access to affordable, high-quality care.

We were grateful to see the legislature preserve funding in the state budget, [HB1](#), for critical initiatives such as the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) (maintained at \$78 million) and LA4.

[HB313](#) (McFarland), the supplementary budget bill, includes a provision directing unspent LDOE funds from FY25-26 to be deposited into the ECE Fund. Other efforts to boost dedicated funding streams, however, such as [SB135](#) (Mizell) which would have removed the cap on sports wagering revenue dedicated to early learning, stalled.

Several other measures related to optimizing access and funding for early learning programs included [HB992](#) (Freiberg). This bill requires the LDOE to establish a statewide early childhood identification system that will connect participation in publicly funded early learning programs with later educational outcomes. The data tracking will provide policymakers with a stronger evidence base to evaluate program effectiveness and support future investments.



Ready Louisiana Coalition Early Education Day at the Capitol.

Additionally, the legislature passed [SB351](#) (Andrews), the “Working Mothers’ Support Act,” which requires LDOE to develop a provisional eligibility determination process for CCAP. With CCAP wait times being around 1.5 years, this bill allows pregnant women to join the wait list prior to their child’s birth. Although legislation was proposed to support the development of early learning microcenters through [HB1242](#) (formerly [HB628](#)) (T. Landry), the bill did not make it past Senate final passage.

In the realm of early education governance, [HB1146](#) (Wyble) passed, transferring members and responsibilities of the Advisory Council on Early Childhood Care and Education to the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission.

DUAL ENROLLMENT & POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS

Removing barriers to higher education and high quality credential attainment is an important part of a long-term, sustainable workforce development strategy for Louisiana. This session saw several efforts aimed at helping students earn college credit earlier and simplifying access to postsecondary opportunities.

[HB649](#) (Brass) created a single statewide application process for dual enrollment programs, simplifying and streamlining participation for families and students. Additionally, [HB325](#) (Brass) [expanded eligibility for TOPS-Tech](#) awards to include the completion of nine credits achieved through dual enrollment courses.

Further attention devoted to TOPS this session was reflected in the passing of [HR17](#) and [HR171](#) (Turner), both of which commission studies to better understand the state's return on investment from TOPS, TOPS-Tech, and the MJ Foster Promise Program, administered by the Blanco Center in conjunction with state agencies.



Relatedly, [HB1058](#) (Bamburg) made it to the Governor's desk, establishing a centralized data system to collect information on financial aid usage and outcomes at institutions enrolling TOPS recipients. Meanwhile, [HB385](#) (Bamburg), which would have required repayment of TOPS awards in certain circumstances when students lose eligibility, failed to pass the House (read more on [the Advocate](#)).

TEACHER PAY & BENEFITS

With our state's teacher salaries continuing to lag behind the Southern Regional Average, addressing Louisiana's teacher pay gap remained a significant conversation throughout session. For the past several years, teachers and support staff have received annual stipends through one-time legislative appropriations. This year, however, lawmakers anticipated Constitutional Amendment #3 (CA3) on the ballot would provide a long-term solution – and thus did not include funding for those stipends in the budget.

Following the failure of CA3 on the May 16 ballot, uncertainty remains around teacher compensation for the upcoming school year. The legislature, facing the constraints of a reduced Revenue Estimating Conference forecast, did not restore stipends to the budget. Last year, this appropriation was around \$198 million.

Governor Landry has since committed to finding a way to keep teachers financially whole, but questions around implementation remain. Read the most recent reporting in the [Louisiana Illuminator](#).

Several bills sought to address educator pay and benefits. [HB558](#) (Echols), which never got a hearing, would have used executive branch savings to align district salaries to the Southern Regional average.

As a bit of good news for teachers, [SB157](#) (Jenkins) created the "Parental Leave for Educators Act," providing eligible K-12 public school employees up to six weeks of paid parental leave following the birth, adoption, foster placement, or pregnancy loss of a child. The bill establishes a state reimbursement fund to local education agencies for substitute teacher costs, estimated to cost approximately \$6.6 million annually.

CAREER EXPOSURE & WORK-BASED LEARNING

With economic development activity in the state accelerating, cradle-to-career policies have gained substantial traction. This session, legislators passed several instruments aimed at better connecting students to the workforce training and credential attainment demanded by employers:

- [SB305](#) (Edmonds) established a publicly available statewide dashboard for career alignment. The Board of Regents, Louisiana Works, and other agencies will collaborate to share education and career opportunities with students and their families.
- [SB376](#) (Mizell), or the Learn and Earn Act, is a framework for public and charter high schools to establish career practicums in partnership with businesses, allowing students to gain hands-on experience while earning academic credit.
- [HB268](#) (Carver) expanded requirements for schools to incorporate career-related activities for middle school students, helping introduce career exploration opportunities earlier in K-12.
- [SB504](#) (Carter) requires vocational training opportunities to be included in students' Individual Graduation Plans and certain Individualized Education Programs, ensuring families are better informed about workforce pathways available in their communities.

The Legislature also advanced several measures to strengthen apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities:

- [SB322](#) (Duplessis) formalizes Louisiana's youth apprenticeship definition.
- [SCR33](#) (Myers) creates a Work-Based Learning Coordination Task Force to evaluate and better align programs across education, workforce, economic development, and industry partners.
- [HB315](#) (Melerine) prohibits non-compete agreements for interns and apprentices, helping ensure participants can pursue future educational and employment opportunities after completing these programs.

WORKFORCE & HIGHER EDUCATION

WORKFORCE SYSTEM OPTIMIZATION & CRADLE-TO-CAREER ALIGNMENT

Following the One-Door legislation that advanced last year, lawmakers continued conversations around restructuring and modernizing the state's workforce system. Bills sent to the Governor include:

- [HB680](#) (Wyble) authorizing a more coordinated statewide workforce development system by allowing Louisiana Works and the Workforce Investment Council to pursue federal WIOA waivers to streamline workforce programs and consolidate statewide planning. The bill underwent significant amendments throughout the legislative process to preserve local workforce board authority and local control over investments and service delivery, moving to balance statewide coordination and regional flexibility.
- [HB951](#) (Bamburg) creates the Office of Business Workforce Solutions within Louisiana Works, modeled after Mississippi's AccelerateMS.
- [HB549](#) (Berault) establishes the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Program to support short-term workforce training.
- [SB383](#) (Bass) expands employer eligibility to participate in the Incumbent Worker Training Program.
- [HB807](#) (Brass) creates the Workforce Instructor Capacity Investment Program to help address shortages in high-demand workforce training programs.

Consistent with our support for a comprehensive workforce strategy that increases economic mobility for working families, Ellevate advocated for proposals to increase Louisiana's minimum wage. No related bills advanced out of committee. However, lawmakers significantly increased funding for the MJ Foster Promise Program in the state budget, raising the dedication from approximately \$10.5 million last year to \$25 million for FY 2027.

HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE & AFFORDABILITY

Legislators also took a look at reevaluating higher education funding and governance structures. [SB484](#) (Abraham) transferred a number of workforce-related responsibilities from the Board of Regents to Louisiana Works and individual university management boards. Workforce-related initiatives including programs such as the Health Works Commission and Cybersecurity Talent Initiative Fund, would move to Louisiana Works, while management boards would assume responsibility for a number of student-facing and campus programs. The legislation also shifts responsibility for certain reporting functions, modifies approval requirements for smaller capital projects, and reflects an ongoing effort to clarify the roles of statewide and institution-level governing entities.

[HB1084](#) (Turner) authorizes public postsecondary institutions to increase tuition and mandatory fees by up to 10 percent beginning in 2027, while requiring institutions to consider factors such as student affordability, peer institution costs, and Louisiana household incomes when making those decisions. This legislation could provide higher education systems more flexibility to address rising operational expenses and longstanding funding gaps. Still, affordability concerns remain. Read more on [The Advocate](#).

TAXATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TAX POLICY & ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

With the full impacts of the 2024 tax reforms still taking effect, relatively little movement happened this session with regards to tax policy.

Although few anticipated that any sort of sales tax collection centralization legislation would be passed this session, [HB620](#), a constitutional amendment, and its statutory companion [HB658](#) (Carlson), were proposed. These bills were voluntarily deferred in the interest of allowing more time to evaluate the ongoing rollout of the new hybrid filing system and involve further stakeholder negotiations.

Though it largely remains a long-term priority for many in the legislature, proposals related to eliminating/phasing out state income tax ([HB411](#) (Wyble), [HB253](#) (McCormick), and [HB898](#) (McMakin)) failed to progress. Similarly, constitutional amendments that would have expanded the homestead exemption (([SB7](#) (Kleinpeter), [SB88](#) (Miller), and [HB440](#) (Newell))), met similar fates of deferral for future study and stakeholder collaboration. One exception made it to the Governor's desk, though, [HB514](#) (Farnum), a constitutional amendment allowing local governments to increase the homestead exemption up to \$300,000 for seniors, increasing with age.

As Louisiana continues evaluating the impacts of recent tax reforms, many of these issues are expected to return during next year's fiscal session.

Interestingly, the millage "rollback" bills, [HB570](#) and its statutory companion [HB521](#) (Wilder), made their way to the Governor's desk. This legislation provides local taxing authorities greater flexibility in adjusting millage rates following reassessments. It will be on the November 3 ballot.

Several bills aimed at improving tax administration and economic competitiveness were also passed this session including [SB128](#) (Foil) allowing the Department of Revenue to contract with private entities for updated taxpayer address information. Additionally, [SB318](#) (Reese) revised reporting requirements related to the state's Tax Exemption Budget and return-on-investment analyses.

On the economic development side of things, [HB618](#) (McMakin) was passed, giving Louisiana Economic Development (LED) the authority to increase certain program fees.

The legislature also made significant economic development investments in the budget. Among the largest was \$125 million for the High-Impact Jobs Program, Louisiana's primary incentive program for attracting and retaining high-wage jobs. They also appropriated an additional \$50 million for the Louisiana FastSites program, bringing total investments in site development to \$200 million over the past two years. Other notable investments included \$24 million for the Rural Health Innovation Fund, \$5 million for the Louisiana Talent Opportunity Initiative to attract workforce talent to the state, and \$5 million in additional funding for LED's Rapid Response Fund.

Additional economic development legislation made its way through session including [SB384](#) (Harris) creating a Pilot Innovation Hub to support tech-based entrepreneurship and commercialization efforts.

At the same time, the state is positioning itself as an attractive destination for space flight projects. This session the legislature passed [HB1088](#) and [HB1179](#) (Bacala) creating new sales and ad valorem tax incentives for the aerospace industry. [HB1071](#) (McFarland) also carved out exceptions to public records law for aerospace facilities/activities, and [HB1250](#) (substitute for [HB1099](#)) granted protections from temporary restraining orders for noise pollution and other public nuisance claims for aerospace activities. Details around any potential deals are largely closed, but you can read more on the [Louisiana Illuminator](#).

ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

COASTAL RESTORATION & PROTECTION

Ensuring coastal restoration and protection decisions are grounded in science and transparency is an existential matter for Louisiana.

Through two resolutions, [SR7](#) (Hensgens) and [HRI](#) (Bourriaque), legislators approved the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority's (CPRA) FY 2027 Annual Plan, authorizing approximately \$1.54 billion in coastal protection and restoration investments across 143 active projects statewide.

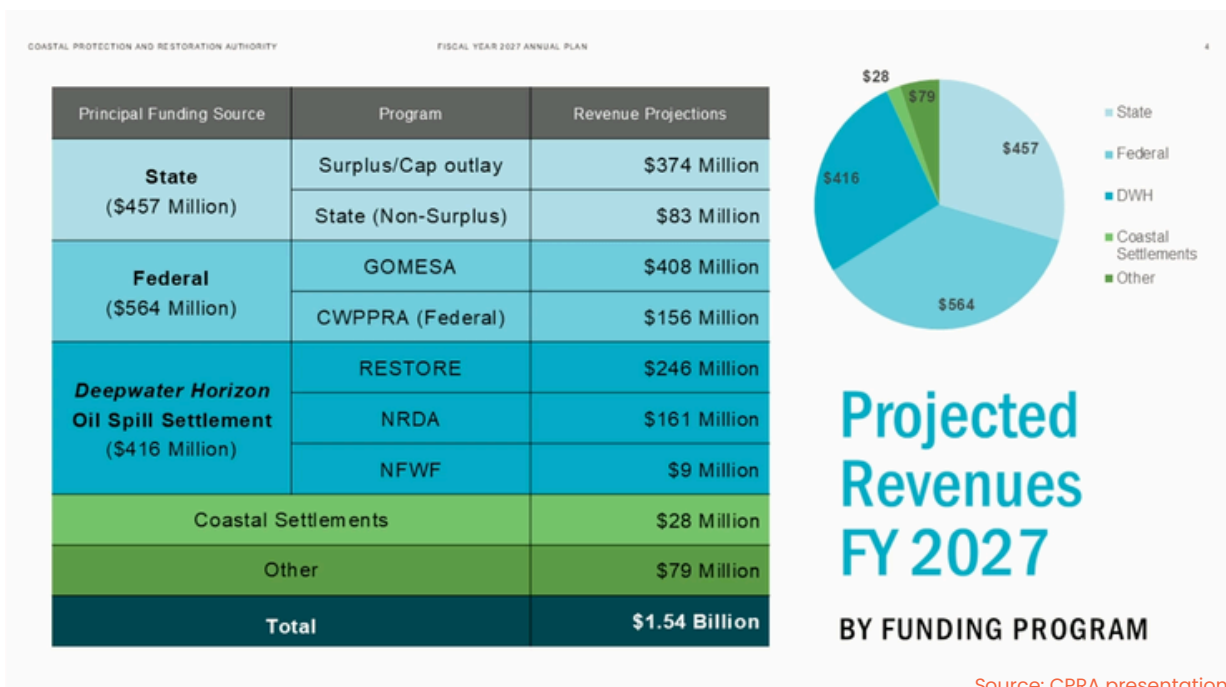
The plan reflects a significant strategic shift under the Landry administration, moving away from the previously planned Mid-Barataria and Mid-Breton sediment diversions and instead prioritizing marsh creation, barrier island restoration, levee improvements, and large-scale dredging projects.



Source: CPRA presentation

While the annual plan ultimately received unanimous legislative approval, debate surrounding the cancellation of the diversion projects highlighted broader conversations about science-based decision making, financial transparency, long-term restoration strategies, and the future direction of Louisiana's coastal program.

Read more on [the Times-Picayune](#) and check out the CPRA's full [2027 Annual Plan](#) online.



Source: CPRA presentation

Additionally, flood protection governance was also a significant topic this session. Following over a year of controversy, resignations, and public disputes involving the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East (SLFPA-East) (read more on the [Times-Picayune](#)), the legislature considered several measures related to levee board membership and governance.



[HB1240](#) (substitute for [HB836](#)) (Hilferty), would have reset the board's membership, requiring the Senate to reconfirm all members of the SLFPA-East board before the end of the year. Members not reconfirmed would have been removed and replaced through the existing nominating committee process. The bill, however, never got a vote on the House floor.

Meanwhile, [SB56](#) (Connick), which has been sent to the Governor, reorganizes flood protection governance on the West Bank by bringing the Lafitte Area Independent Levee District under the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-West (SLFPA-West) and expanding the authority's board representation. The legislation emerged amid concerns about the long-term operational and financial stability of the Lafitte levee district. Read more about the dynamics at play on the [Times-Picayune](#).

During the bill's final consideration in House Transportation committee, legislators adopted amendments that say that SFLPA-East may hire an independent compliance officer as a classified state employee. Amendments also clarified the limits and scope of law enforcement within the agency. While the final bill does not directly address larger governance issues within the authority, it does represent recognition of how crucial independence and technical expertise are to flood protection system integrity.



UTILITIES

In a time where Louisiana is preparing for major industrial development projects which will weigh heavily on our electrical grid, as well as rising energy costs, utility regulation, ratepayer protections, and grid reliability became important discussions. Recognizing this, Ellevate supported policies to promote transparency, accountability, and strong consumer protections to ensure that while we welcome investment in our state, private economic development projects should not unfairly shift costs onto individual ratepayers.



Several legislators advanced proposals to address the impacts of major energy users like data centers on our grid and utility rates. The consumer protection legislation that ultimately made it to the Governor's desk was [HB478](#) (Knox). This bill requires utility companies that overcharge customers to reimburse within 90 days after an overcharge is discovered. Aiming to increase billing transparency and accountability, this measure applies to electric, gas, and water utilities regulated by the Public Service Commission (PSC) or local governmental entities.

While bills related to data center regulation and cost allocation, including [HB922](#) (Schamerhorn), [SB364](#) (Barrow), and [SB490](#) (Hensgens) (Read more on the [Louisiana Illuminator](#)), did not reach final passage, they generated significant discussion about how large industrial customers should be regulated, how infrastructure costs should be shared between these entities and residential ratepayers, and Louisiana's economic attractiveness.



Study resolutions that passed looked at Louisiana's long-term energy needs. [HR197](#) (Orgeron) requested the PSC study distributed energy generation and energy storage opportunities, while [SR174](#) (Cameron Henry) recreated the Task Force on Energy Infrastructure and Modernization to examine issues including energy self-generation, industrial microgrids, grid modernization, and permitting processes.

BROADBAND

One of the most crucial lessons from Covid was the importance of reliable internet access for healthcare, education, economic opportunity, and delivery of government services. It also made apparent the stark reality of the digital divide in this state with rural communities especially underserved.

Louisiana's Granting Unserved Municipalities Broadband Opportunities (GUMBO) program (the state's administration of federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding), has shown major success. The state has become a national leader in broadband deployment and was the first state approved to receive \$1.36 billion in federal broadband funding (see the Governor's 2025 press release on the matter [here](#)).

Several broadband-related proposals were considered this session including [HB798](#) (M. Johnson) imposing notice requirements for price increases and [SB209](#) (Myers) seeking to expand local authority over broadband infrastructure deployment. Additional debate occurred across multiple measures regarding the appropriate role of the PSC in broadband oversight, though no significant changes were ultimately enacted.



The primary broadband legislation to reach final passage was [SB80](#) (Mizell), which expands the authority of the Office of Broadband Development and Connectivity (ConnectLA). The agency was granted greater discretion over administrative fees and the timing of broadband grant disbursements, while also making several technical and administrative changes to the state's GUMBO program.

RESILIENT HOUSING

As we continue to face increasingly severe storms and some of the highest homeowners insurance costs in the nation, resilient housing is one of Ellevate's long-term policy priorities. While several proposals were introduced this session related to fortified roofing requirements, local authority, insurance discounts, and homeowner assistance, most failed to advance.

The primary instrument to reach final passage was [HB1187](#) (Sawyer) which directs excess emergency assessment revenues collected by the Louisiana Citizens Property Insurance Corporation to the Louisiana Fortify Homes Program Fund. Though it will not meet the massive demand, the legislation is expected to provide funding for approximately 5,000 additional fortified roof grants. This represents an expansion of the program by about 60%. Combined with other state investments, this measure is projected to help strengthen approximately 13,000 Louisiana homes against future storm damage while supporting efforts to improve long-term insurance affordability. Read more on the [Louisiana Illuminator](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Understanding how critical Louisiana's roads, ports, rail, and other transportation assets are to our economic growth and competitiveness, legislators considered a handful of proposals to modernize and expand the state's infrastructure network.

The most significant infrastructure measures to pass included [HB1157](#) (Bourriaque) creating the Louisiana State Infrastructure Bank within the Governor's Office to provide low interest loans and financing assistance to local governments and approved public-private partnerships for transportation and public infrastructure projects. The bank leverages state, federal, and private capital and uses a revolving loan model that allows funds to be repaid and reinvested in future projects.

Intending to increase DOTD's efficiency and operational readiness, [HB856](#) (Fontenot) also passed, authorizing the Office of Louisiana Highway Construction to use Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity contracting authority for highway and bridge construction and maintenance. This makes the procurement process more flexible as the state can prequalify contractors and issue work orders as needs arise, rather than bidding on each project separately.

Additionally, [HB776](#) (Bourriaque) modified the Port Construction and Development Priority Program to better support rail projects associated with ports. Similarly, [HB345](#) (McMakin) added rail infrastructure at ports as an eligible project under the Class II and III Rail Infrastructure Improvement Program.

Another notable bill, [SB469](#) (Abraham), passed after conference committee to update Louisiana's underground utility damage prevention laws, improving excavation safety requirements, project coordination, and utility location transparency.

Legislators also debated [SB474](#) (G. Miller), which would have established oversight and safety requirements for frontier artificial intelligence systems due to potential risks to critical infrastructure and public safety, but the bill did not advance.



ADDITIONAL INTEREST

Debates around energy policy also took place this session with one of the most notable measures passing being [HB804](#) (Geymann). This bill created the Louisiana Energy Protection Act limiting certain climate change-related claims against energy companies. Though this bill preserves means of recourse for claims based on violations of law, permits, or safety standards, the legislation was criticized for its potential to limit future legal remedies related to environmental and climate impacts.

Additionally, considerations around carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) carried over from last session. Ellevate previously supported science-based, safety-first policies for the technology that balance economic opportunity with environmental protection and meaningful local say.

Several proposals seeking to expand local authority over carbon storage projects failed to advance, including measures that would have allowed parish-level votes on whether carbon sequestration projects could move forward. Read more on the [Louisiana Illuminator](#).

One CCS measure that did pass, however, was [HB79](#) (R. Carter) which revises Louisiana's carbon capture liability framework by removing certain limits on damage recovery related to CCS incidents.

Lawmakers also approved two study resolutions. [HR144](#) (C. Owen) requests a peer-reviewed study from the Board of Regents of the potential impacts of carbon storage on Louisiana's water resources and ecological environment, while [HR276](#) (J. Landry) creates the Task Force on Advanced Drilling to study the impacts of carbon storage on mineral rights and drilling operations.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

MENTAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Expanding access to mental and behavioral healthcare, including crisis services and building behavioral health workforce capacity, is a critical priority for Ellevate. There was some movement here this session, and several bills worth noting advanced to the Governor's desk:

- [HB352](#) (Mack) expands access to behavioral health services for public school students by allowing greater flexibility in service delivery while strengthening protections for students and coordination between schools and healthcare providers.
- [HB909](#) (Spell) requires health insurance coverage for mobile crisis response and behavioral health crisis services, helping improve access to care during mental health emergencies.
- [SB222](#) (Pressly) reduces certain administrative and credentialing requirements for behavioral health providers and directs the LDH to pursue federal approval for reimbursement of certain telehealth-based behavioral health services.
- [HB1139](#) (Fisher) expands behavioral health evaluation and treatment requirements for certain individuals admitted by an emergency certificate.
- [HB392](#) (Boyd) requires suicide prevention hotline information to be more readily available to students through school resources and [HB626](#) (Jordan) requires public postsecondary institutions to implement suicide prevention plans.

Other proposals reflected growing interest in strengthening Louisiana's behavioral health system, including [HB395](#) (Marcelle), which would have established a program to recruit and retain school-based mental health professionals, and [SB5](#) (Hensgens) which sought to establish safeguards and disclosure requirements for mental health chatbots. Neither measure ultimately advanced.

Several resolutions, however, were adopted including:

- [HCR64](#) (Moore) requesting a study of behavioral health courts and their role in improving outcomes for individuals with mental illness involved in the justice system.
- [HCR105](#) (Freiberg) and [SCR61](#) (Barrow) urge LDH and health insurers to increase reimbursement rates for behavioral health crisis centers.

LONG TERM CARE

Louisiana ranks last in the nation on the CMS quality rating scale in long-term care, with us having the highest number of nursing homes ranked one or two stars on a scale of one to five.

Positively, we saw an additional 750 Community Choice Waiver slots funded in the budget. This program allows more seniors and adult individuals with long-term disabilities to age in place.



Kathy Kliebert testifying on SB405 in Senate Health & Welfare.

The most significant piece of legislation sent to the Governor this session was [SB405](#) (Talbot) which establishes a statewide nursing facility oversight initiative within the LDH. Originally filed as the Nursing Home Choice Act, the bill evolved after extensive stakeholder negotiations into what many view as the most meaningful nursing home quality reform effort in decades. The measure directs the state to establish quality goals, coordinate improvement efforts, build internal expertise, and report annually to the Legislature on progress.

Lawmakers also approved [SB190](#) (Mizell), which strengthens oversight of underperforming nursing facilities participating in the federal Special Focus Facility program. The legislation increases transparency and resident notification requirements while also imposing accountability measures for facilities that fail to improve.

The legislature also debated whether Louisiana's long-standing moratorium on new nursing facilities and additional nursing home beds should continue. While some lawmakers questioned whether the policy remains appropriate given changing long-term care needs, [HB199](#) (D. Miller) ultimately passed, extending the moratorium through 2031 while requiring additional data collection and reporting.

CHILD WELFARE

Child welfare emerged as a significant issue this session amid heightened scrutiny of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) following reports of staffing shortages, foster care challenges, and child deaths that many lawmakers viewed as preventable (read more in the [Times-Picayune](#)).



Session began with tense hearings on proposals to restructure or even abolish DCFS, however the legislature ultimately focused on strengthening oversight and accountability.

The most significant measure was [SB237](#) (Barrow), a comprehensive child welfare reform package that recreates DCFS while expanding the authority of the State Child Ombudsman, strengthening review processes for child fatality and near-fatality incidents, establishing a multidisciplinary critical incident review team, improving coordination among child protection agencies, and enhancing abuse investigation and reporting procedures. Overall discussion indicated that additional child welfare reforms are likely to remain a priority in future sessions.

Beyond the child welfare system itself, child safety was considered during hearings for [HB586](#) (Cox), which would have established criminal penalties when minors gain access to improperly stored firearms and cause harm to themselves or others. The bill ultimately did not advance out of committee.

Although proposals related to regulating artificial intelligence stalled due to federal influence (read more in the [Louisiana Illuminator](#)), several measures aimed at protecting children online did pass. [HB134](#) (Schlegel) prohibited online platforms from delivering or displaying platform-generated material deemed harmful to minors, while [HB427](#) (Schlegel) strengthened the Louisiana's Kids Online Protection and Anti-Grooming Act by requiring additional privacy protections for minors' accounts, limiting adult connections, establishing default private account settings, and expanding parental notification tools.

SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Louisiana's longstanding challenges with domestic violence received increased attention this session following the tragic Shreveport domestic violence mass shooting that claimed the lives of eight children. Domestic violence shelters and victim service organizations face significant funding shortfalls due to the loss of federal funding. Despite requests for \$3.2 million in state funding to backfill those reductions, no additional funding was included in the state budget. Louisiana still faces more than 1,300 unmet requests for emergency shelter annually, and providers have warned that services may be scaled back if funding gaps continue. Read more on the [Louisiana Illuminator](#).

The legislature also considered how the criminal justice system responds to survivors whose experiences of abuse contributed to their involvement in criminal offenses. What ultimately passed was [SB523](#) (formerly [SB91](#)) (Mizell). The final legislation, which was significantly amended down from the original bill proposing sentencing reform, allows documented survivors to seek clemency consideration sooner and adds victimization as a mitigating factor for courts to consider during sentencing decisions.

Several additional proposals aimed at strengthening services for survivors did not make it through the legislative process:

- [HB998](#) (Freeman) would have expanded forensic medical examinations and reimbursement for victims of domestic violence involving strangulation.
- [HB182](#) (T. Johnson) sought to require hospitals with emergency departments to maintain qualified professionals to conduct forensic examinations for sexual assault survivors.
- [HB390](#) (Walters) would have provided eligible employees with up to three days of unpaid leave to seek medical care, counseling, legal assistance, relocation assistance, or other services related to domestic abuse.

MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH

It is well known that Louisiana faces some of the nation's worst maternal and infant health outcomes. This session, several measures were taken up but with mixed results on final passage.

Pregnancy resource centers were the subject of significant debate this session following a 2025 Legislative Auditor report that identified oversight gaps in Louisiana's Pregnancy and Baby Care Initiative, including concerns regarding service verification, performance reporting, and the absence of a licensure framework for centers providing certain health-related services (read more on the [Times-Picayune](#)). Public discussion was further fueled by reports of a data breach involving a Louisiana pregnancy center and broader questions regarding privacy protections for individuals seeking services (read more on [WWNO](#)).

Against that backdrop, [HB611](#) (Freeman), which would have created a state licensure framework for pregnancy-related service centers, failed to advance from committee despite amendments. Likewise, [HB897](#) (M. Landry) sought to establish data privacy/HIPAA protections for individuals utilizing services through the publicly-funded Louisiana Pregnancy and Baby Care Initiative. This bill passed the House unanimously after bipartisan amendments but was ultimately deferred in Senate Health & Welfare.



Several other maternal and child health measures did become law:

- [SB32](#) (McMath) establishes a Perinatal Bereavement Care Initiative within the LDH to improve support for families experiencing pregnancy or infant loss.
- [SB451](#) (Kleinpeter) modernizes Louisiana's newborn hearing screening laws and strengthens early detection efforts for hearing loss in infants.
- [HB1231](#) (Berault) expands Medicaid coverage for continuous glucose monitoring devices for certain pregnant women requiring insulin treatment for diabetes.
- [HB944](#) (Hilferty) creates a Women's Health Consortium within LDH to coordinate stakeholders, develop recommendations, and help guide future investments in women's health initiatives.

HEALTHCARE PRICE TRANSPARENCY & AFFORDABILITY

As the rising price of healthcare is widely recognized as problematic for patients, employers, and providers, the legislature spent time this session analyzing cost drivers of healthcare spending and ways to increase transparency for consumers and regulators.

One of the most closely watched proposals was [HB946](#) (M. Landry), which would have put more teeth in the law to address hospitals out of compliance with federal pricing transparency regulation. While the bill generated significant discussion about transparency and consumer access to pricing information, it was ultimately deferred.

[SB401](#) (Talbot), however, was approved, creating a Prescription Drug Affordability Board within the Department of Insurance. As enacted, the board will collect and analyze information from pharmaceutical manufacturers, pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), and insurers to better understand prescription drug pricing and affordability challenges. The final version was scaled back from earlier proposals, and its enactment is linked to broader PBM reforms enacted this session (see PBM Reform section below).

CANCER ADVOCACY

CANCER SCREENINGS & EARLY DETECTION

Legislation to expand access to cancer screenings and early detection passed this session, which we were grateful to see. These included:

- [SB84](#) (Myers) eliminates cost sharing for prostate cancer screenings and requires coverage for men ages 40 to 49 when medically necessary and appropriate under National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) guidelines, helping reduce cost barriers for higher-risk individuals.
- [HB1196](#) (Freeman) addresses a longstanding insurance coverage issue related to colorectal cancer screening. The bill requires that a colonoscopy remain classified as a preventive screening service even when a polyp or other tissue is removed during the procedure and ensures that follow-up colonoscopies recommended by a healthcare provider are also treated as screening services in the same case as when a polyp or other tissue is removed.

EQUITABLE ACCESS FOR ORAL CHEMOTHERAPY

Ellevate has maintained that treatment decisions should be driven by medical need rather than insurance decisions. As such, we supported [HB766](#) (Freeman) which strengthens Louisiana's oral chemotherapy coverage parity by requiring health plans to cover prescribed orally administered anti-cancer medications on a basis no less favorable than infused or injected cancer treatments.

The legislation prohibits insurers from imposing greater cost-sharing or more restrictive utilization management requirements on oral therapies and includes protections related to copay accumulator and similar programs that can prevent patient assistance from counting toward deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums.



Julie Stokes testifying on HB766 (Freeman) in House Appropriations.

BIOMARKER TESTING & CLINICALLY GUIDED CARE

Access to biomarker testing has remained a priority following Louisiana's 2023 law requiring insurance coverage for evidence-based biomarker testing. Biomarker testing helps physicians identify the most effective treatment for a patient based on the biology of their disease, making it a critical component of precision medicine and modern cancer care.

This session, legislators passed [SB169](#) (Talbot) to clarify that coverage for biomarker testing cannot be denied based on certain laboratory classification or credentialing issues and by establishing that the biomarker testing statute controls when conflicts arise with other insurance provisions.

During the legislative process, efforts to expand and clarify coverage requirements raised questions regarding the impact of the testing mandate on federal Affordable Care Act benchmark limits (and defrayal). As a result, lawmakers also adopted [SR170](#) (Talbot), directing the Department of Insurance and LDH to conduct a comprehensive review of how the 2023 biomarker testing law is being implemented, including approval and denial rates, prior authorization practices, delays in testing, appeals, and barriers to patient access.

PHARMACY BENEFIT MANAGER (PBM) REFORM

PBM reform emerged as one of the most significant healthcare debates of the 2026 session. PBMs play a powerful role in determining which prescription drugs are covered, how much patients pay at the pharmacy counter, and how pharmacies are reimbursed. Ellevate has taken the position that greater transparency and accountability are needed throughout the prescription drug supply chain to help control costs and ensure that savings benefit patients and plan sponsors rather than intermediaries. Consistent with our support for reform in the prescription drug marketplace, legislators considered a number of PBM-related proposals which were ultimately consolidated and amended throughout the legislative process.

Three primary measures emerged during the debate: [SB387](#) (Bass), [HB1236](#) (formerly [HB866](#)) (DeWitt), and [HB938](#) (Turner). In the end, content from all three bills were merged into SB387 and HB1236. These two, which have been sent to the Governor's desk, represent some of the most comprehensive PBM reform Louisiana has seen.

SB387 establishes clear duties for PBMs, requiring a fully transparent compensation model in which PBMs may earn revenue only through flat, disclosed service fees. The bill prohibits PBMs from generating income through rebates, spread pricing, manufacturer payments, or other pricing-related mechanisms, and requires any such revenues to be passed through in full to plan sponsors. It strengthens oversight by allowing annual audits of PBMs and their affiliates, mandates full disclosure of all revenue in contracts, and imposes significant penalties for violations, including fines and potential license suspension. The bill also includes consumer protections, such as limits on formulary manipulation, continuity of care requirements, and streamlined pharmacy appeals, while ensuring implementation remains consistent with federal law.

HB1236 focuses on pharmacy reimbursement, requiring PBMs to reimburse local independent pharmacies based on acquisition cost methodologies tied to NADAC (National Average Drug Acquisition Cost) and to pay a professional dispensing fee aligned with Medicaid. The bill also strengthens pharmacy appeal rights and enhances oversight to verify compliance. Some have raised concerns that this could create a competitive disadvantage for local pharmacies compared to chain and mail-order pharmacies.

Together, these measures represent a significant shift in how pharmacy benefit managers operate within Louisiana's prescription drug marketplace. Most notably, SB387 restructures PBM compensation by requiring a fully transparent, flat-fee model and eliminating traditional revenue streams tied to drug pricing, thereby reducing longstanding conflicts of interest. While questions remain regarding implementation, enforcement, and potential market impacts—particularly for independent pharmacies—the legislation establishes a meaningful foundation for greater accountability and cost control. As these reforms take effect, ongoing evaluation will be essential to ensure they deliver on their promise of lowering costs and improving access for patients while maintaining a competitive and sustainable pharmacy landscape.

END-OF-LIFE CARE

Related to Ellevate's support for compassionate, patient-centered end-of-life care, [SB270](#) (Jackson-Andrews), known as Ryan's Law, made it to the Governor's desk. This bill requires healthcare facilities to allow terminally ill patients to use physician-recommended medical marijuana while receiving inpatient care. Although medical marijuana is legal in Louisiana, many healthcare facilities have been reluctant to permit its use within their facilities because of concerns related to federal law and funding requirements.

MEDICAL DEBT

Medical debt is the leading cause of bankruptcy both in Louisiana and in the nation. [SB414](#) (Talbot), or the Louisiana Medical Debt Protection Act, was passed this session in response to this crisis.

Though the bill began as an effort to limit predatory medical debt collections practices, including prohibiting wage garnishment for many lower-income patients and protecting primary residences and vehicles from liens and foreclosure, many of those provisions were removed during the legislative process. The final bill still represents meaningful progress by capping interest rates on medical debt at 3%.



Anne Jayes & Alice Kline testifying on SB414 (Talbot) in Senate Commerce.

Final Words

As a final word, we at Ellevate would like to sincerely thank our members for all the work that they do for our state and its people. Our members work across many policy areas on a variety of issues, doing work that is far-reaching and greatly impactful.

Though this session had somewhat of a slow start, tensions reached a fever pitch during redistricting debates that magnified social-political divides and polarization.

One of Ellevate's greatest strengths is our diversity and the belief that we are better together. Beyond political party, race, religion, or class, we are all Louisianans. We are neighbors with deeply intertwined fates and realities.

Though the policymaking process can cause frustration and disillusionment, with some wins being immensely hard-fought and progress being frequently incremental or nonlinear, we at Ellevate maintain hope and an unwavering belief in what we can accomplish together as women for each other, our families, our communities, and this state.

It is with great appreciation and respect that we celebrate your accomplishments and look forward to all that we can do in the future.

Whether you have been at the Capitol in Baton Rouge every day this session, watching from home, or just keeping up with the news, we all have a part to play in improving our state. Your civic engagement – at whatever level – is what drives us forward. We look forward to continuing our work together.

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