

# Georgia Board of Public Health

April 12, 2022

# Agenda

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- Call to order
- Roll Call
- Approval/Adoption of Minutes
- New Business
  - Legislative Update
  - Epidemiology Updates
    - COVID
    - Avian Influenza
  - Commissioner's Closing Remarks
- Board Comments
- Adjournment

# 2022 Legislative Session

Board of Public Health / Megan Andrews, J.D., Office of Government Relations / April 12, 2022

# Bill Tracking

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## 2022 Legislative Session

- 192 Bills
- 89 of these bills are considered direct impact bills

## 2020 Legislative Session

- 186 Bills
- 43 of these bills were considered direct impact bills

# Agency Bills

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- Childhood Lead Poisoning- Passed
- EMS Rapback- Passed
- Smokefree Air Act and Vaping- Did Not Pass
- Filming Patients in Health Care Facilities- Passed

# Childhood Lead Poisoning- HB1355

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## ***PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature***

- This bill lowers the definition for confirmed lead poisoning from 20 to 3.5 micrograms of lead per deciliter to align with CDC recommendations.
- This bill also updates the definition of lead hazards to align with EPA regulations.
- \$1,845,384 was included in the budget to fund additional lead inspectors and equipment throughout the state to implement these changes.

# Smokefree Air Act & Vaping- HB1348

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## ***DID NOT PASS- Did not get called up for a vote in the Senate***

- The current Smoke-free Air Act was adopted in 2005 before vaping became widely popular. Currently, the provisions of law that prohibit smoking in enclosed public spaces, like restaurants, do not apply to vaping. This bill would have updated the Smokefree Air Act to bring parity to the law to treat vaping and traditional tobacco smoking the same.

# EMS Fingerprinting- SB404

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## ***PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature***

- Currently a criminal history check is completed at initial licensure of EMS personnel, but DPH is not notified if a licensee is convicted of a criminal offense that occurs after the initial licensure.
- Under this bill, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation would be authorized to retain fingerprints so DPH can participate in a program allowing ongoing review of the individual's criminal history.



# Filming in Health Depts- SB539

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## ***PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature***

- This bill creates an offense for recording patients in county health department facilities without their consent.
- The Department recently faced challenges with individuals visiting county public health departments and photographing/recording patients without their consent while waiting for clinical services for things like vaccination, HIV treatment, family planning services, etc.
- Unfortunately, when these situations arose, law enforcement were unable to intervene since the act of recording these patients was legally permissible.

# Direct Impact Bills- PASSED

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- HB972
- HB1013
- HB1086
- HB1175
- HB1186
- HB1283
- HB1335
- HB1443
- SB164
- SB319
- SB345
- SB496
- SB514
- SR428

# Mental Health Parity Act- HB1013

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## ***PASSED- Signed by the Governor***

- Comprehensive mental health reform for Georgia.
- DPH will assist in a cross-agency team developing programs to serve disabled infants, children, and youth.
- DPH will also participate in the Multi-Agency Treatment for Children (MATCH) team to explore resources and solutions for complex and unmet needs for children in this state.

# Raw Milk Sales- HB1175

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## ***PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature***

- Authorizes and regulates the production, handling, transporting, and sale of raw milk and raw milk products for human consumption.
- Only allows direct-to-consumer sales of this product.
- Declassifies "any testing equipment used to determine whether a controlled substance has been adulterated and contains a synthetic opioid" (e.g., fentanyl test strips) as drug-related objects.

# Audiology Screening- HB1186

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## ***PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature***

- Allows persons who are not licensed audiologists to use otoacoustic emissions or auditory brainstem response technology as part of a screening process for the initial identification of communication disorders in individuals up to age 22.
- Currently this is only authorized for infants under 3 months old.

# Food Trucks- HB1443

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## ***PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature***

- This bill provides that mobile food service establishments that have active permits may operate in the county of origin and in one or more counties other than its county of origin without obtaining an additional permit.
- This bill does have an anticipated fiscal impact on DPH for IT upgrades that were not funded in the budget (estimated \$244,229, mostly one-time costs).

# HIV Modernization- SB164

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## ***PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature***

- This bill provides for the modernization of HIV related laws to align with science to ensure that laws and policies support current understanding of best public health practices for preventing and treating HIV, scientific evidence about routes of transmission, and the public health goals of promoting HIV prevention and treatment.

# COVID Vaccine Passports- SB345

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## ***PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature***

- Prohibits state and local governments from mandating vaccine passports for the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Private business may still implement COVID-19 vaccine mandates.
- An exception was added for entities that are required to confirm COVID-19 vaccination by CMS or any federal contractual terms.



# Maternal Autopsies- SB496

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## ***PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature***

- Under this bill, a medical examiner's inquiry must be conducted for a death of a pregnant female or one who was pregnant within 1 year of death.
- This does not apply to a death that resulted from an incidental or accidental cause, like a car accident, or where it is apparent that the death wasn't causally related to the pregnancy.
- \$150,000 was added to the DPH budget to fund these autopsies to be conducted by the Regional Perinatal Centers.

# Unmask Georgia Students- SB514

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## ***PASSED- Signed by the Governor***

- Provides that no local board of education, school superintendent, school administrator, teacher, or other school personnel may make or enforce a rule requiring students to wear face masks or coverings while on school property unless the rule allows for exemption by parent or guardian.
- This does not apply to public health administrative orders related to masking.

# Questions

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For more information, please contact:

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# Epidemiology Update

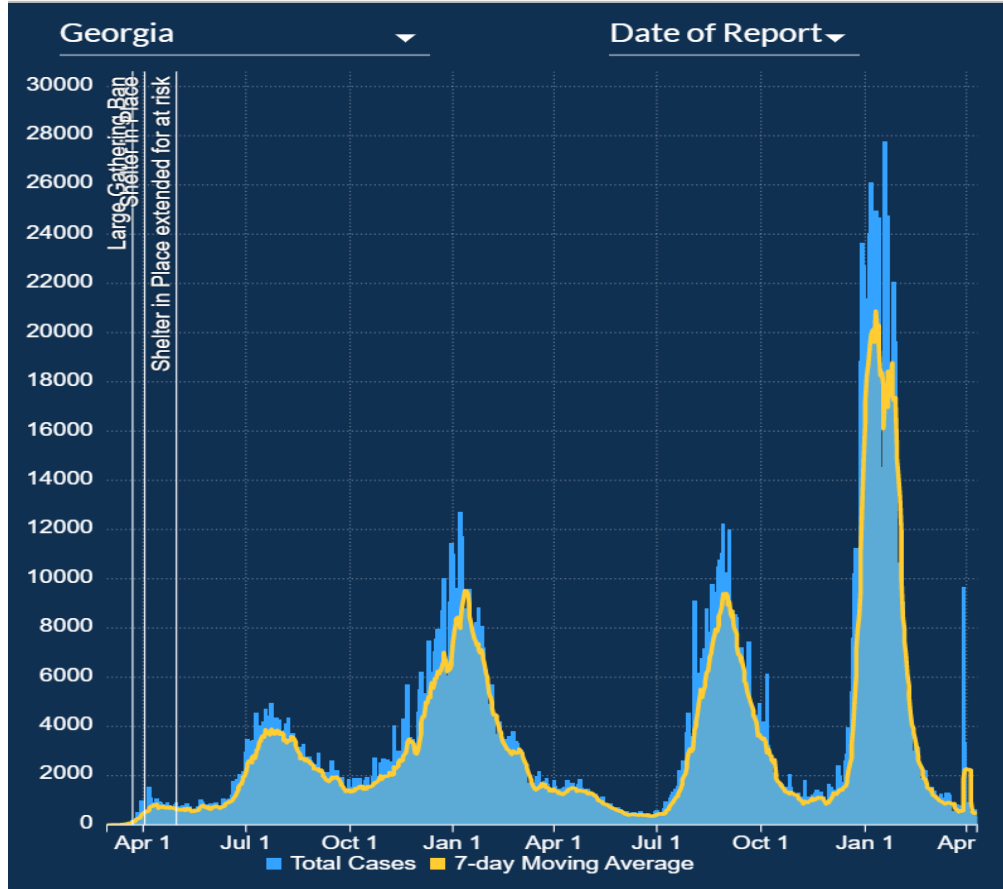
Board of Public Health / Cherie L. Drenzek, DVM, MS, State Epidemiologist / April 12, 2022

# Snapshot of COVID-19

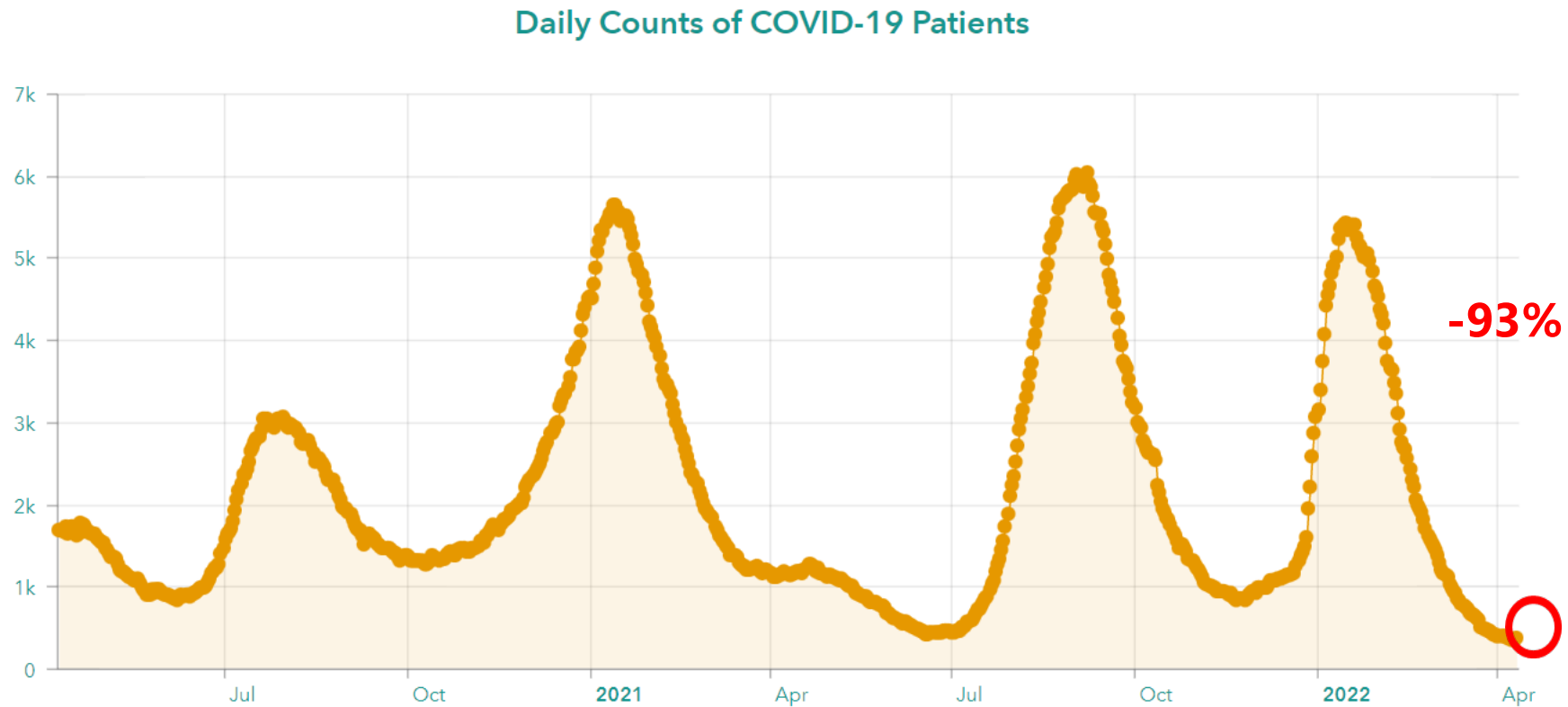
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- In the US, COVID case numbers have been generally flat for the last two weeks, but the picture is mixed. We are seeing BA.2-driven increases in about half of states (particularly the Northeast) and decreases in the other half.
- In Georgia, case numbers have been quite low (nearly as low as before the Delta wave) and flat, but hospitalizations and deaths have continued to decline (by about 30% in the last 2 weeks)
- 56% of the Georgia population is fully vaccinated and 23% boosted (vaccine numbers also decreasing in GA)
- **Most all COVID deaths and hospitalizations have occurred among unvaccinated.**

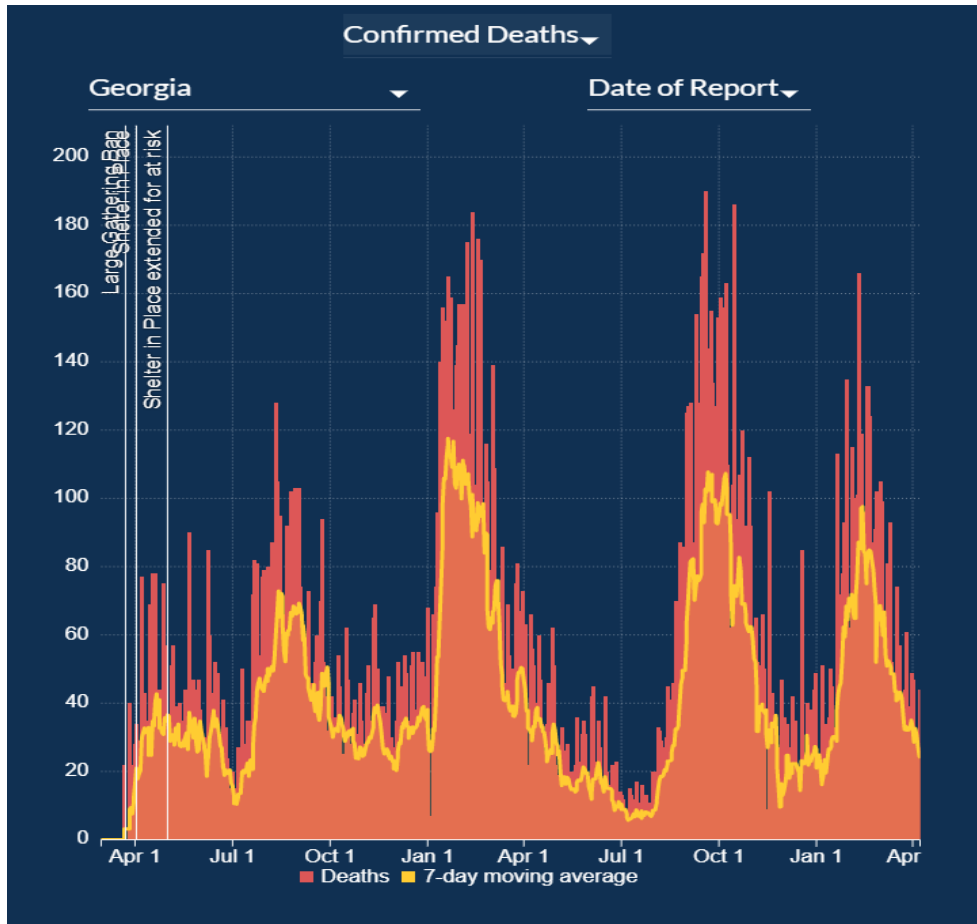
# Total COVID-19 Cases



# COVID-19 Hospitalizations

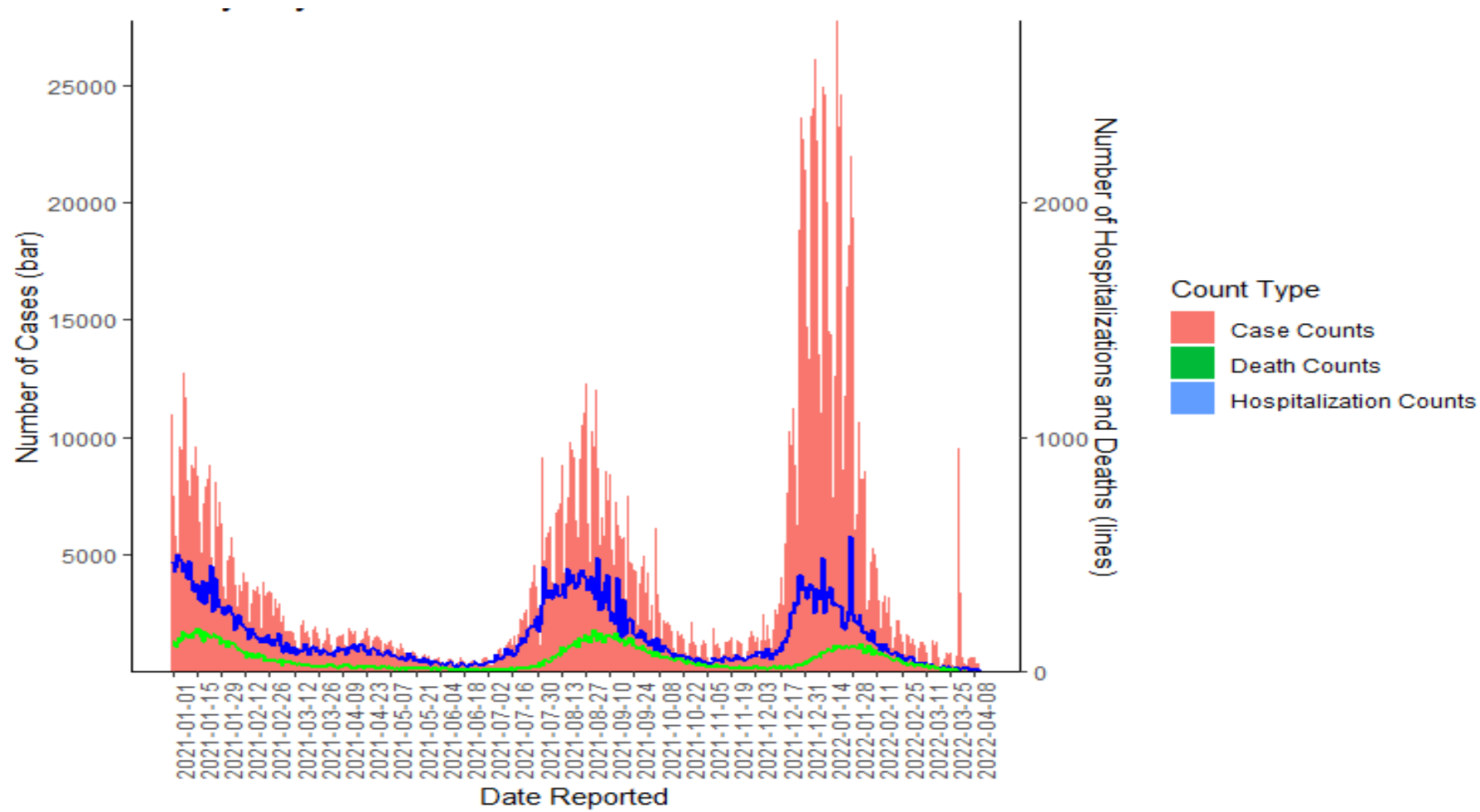


# COVID-19 Deaths



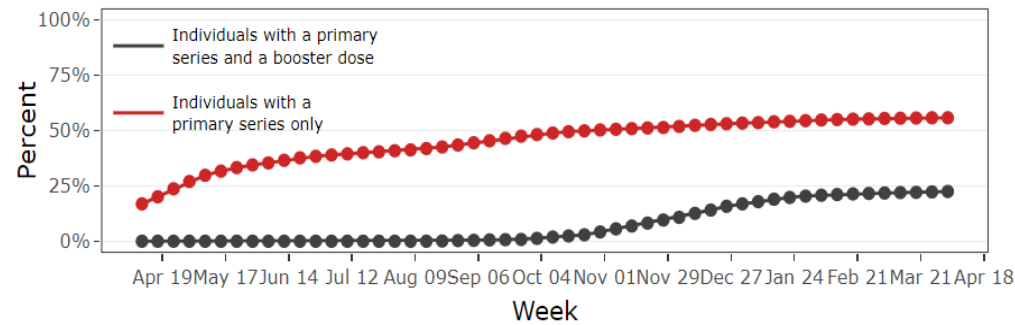


# COVID Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths, Georgia, 1/1/21-4/11/22

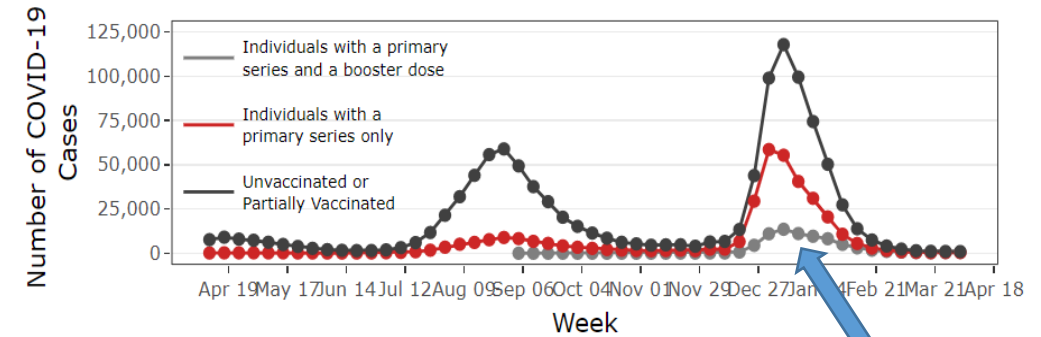


# Cases, Hospitalizations, Deaths by Vaccine Status

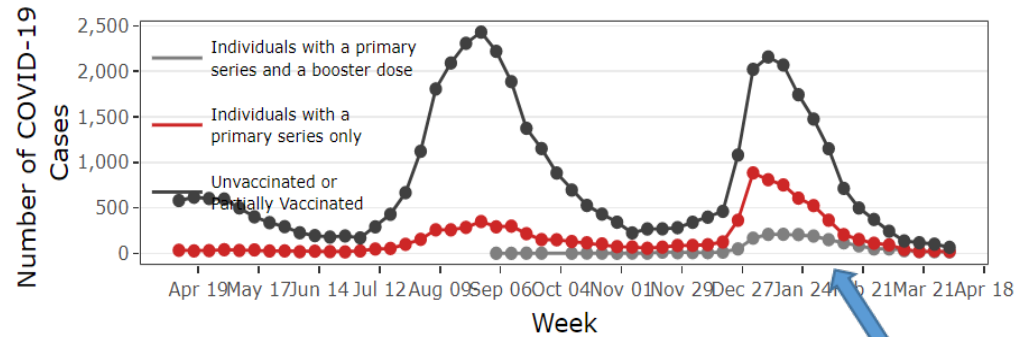
Percent of Georgians with a primary series completed 2021-04-10 to 2022-04-05



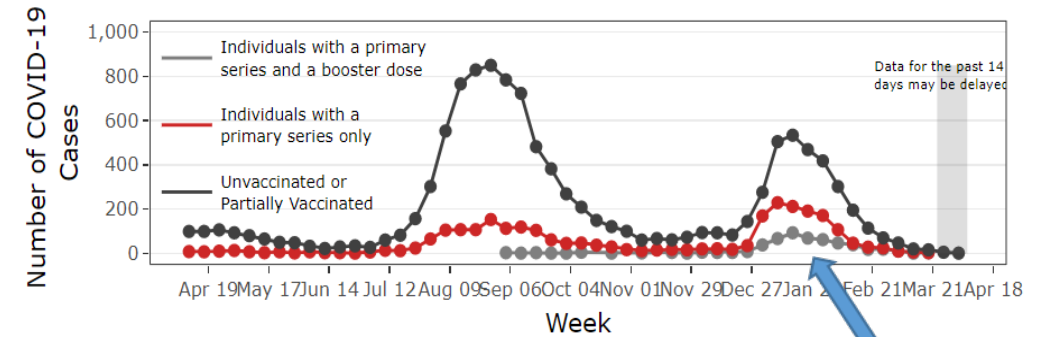
COVID-19 Cases by Date of Positive Test and Vaccination Status 2021-04-10 to 2022-04-05



Any Hospitalization by Date of Positive Test and Vaccination Status 2021-04-10 to 2022-04-05



COVID-19-Related Deaths by Date of Positive Test and Vaccination Status 2021-04-10 to 2022-04-05



# Summary

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- The Omicron surge has retreated, but its sublineage BA.2 is increasing in circulation. BA.2 now accounts for 72% of cases nationally and 60% in Georgia.
- Half of all states are experiencing case increases (not Georgia), but hospitalizations and deaths are still decreasing (impact of vaccination and boosters).
- No complacency: SARS-CoV-2 is still with us, has proven very adept at changing, and has myriad opportunities with so many unvaccinated and immune-compromised people.
- Vaccination, boosters, **surveillance**, testing, and traditional mitigation are critical to continue these declines and WHEN we face other variants that emerge and result in surges over the next several years.

# No Complacency: Influenza Viruses

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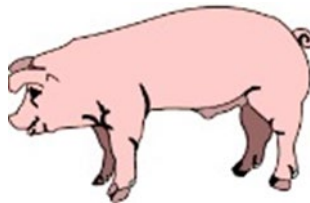
Normally, Influenza A viruses circulate in animal or human reservoirs and are named by their surface proteins (H and N)

Human (H1, H3)

- H1N1
- H3N2
- H1N2

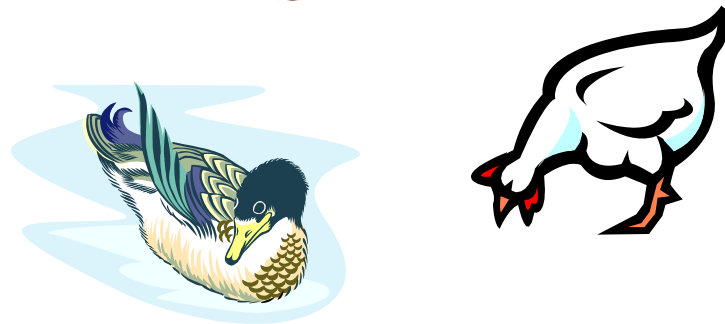


Swine (H1, H2, H3)



Avian (H5, H7, H9)

- H7N9
- H5N1
- H7N7
- H9N2



# No Complacency: Animal Influenza Viruses

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However, any animal flu virus that develops the ability to infect people can evolve, spread, and theoretically cause a pandemic.

Examples:

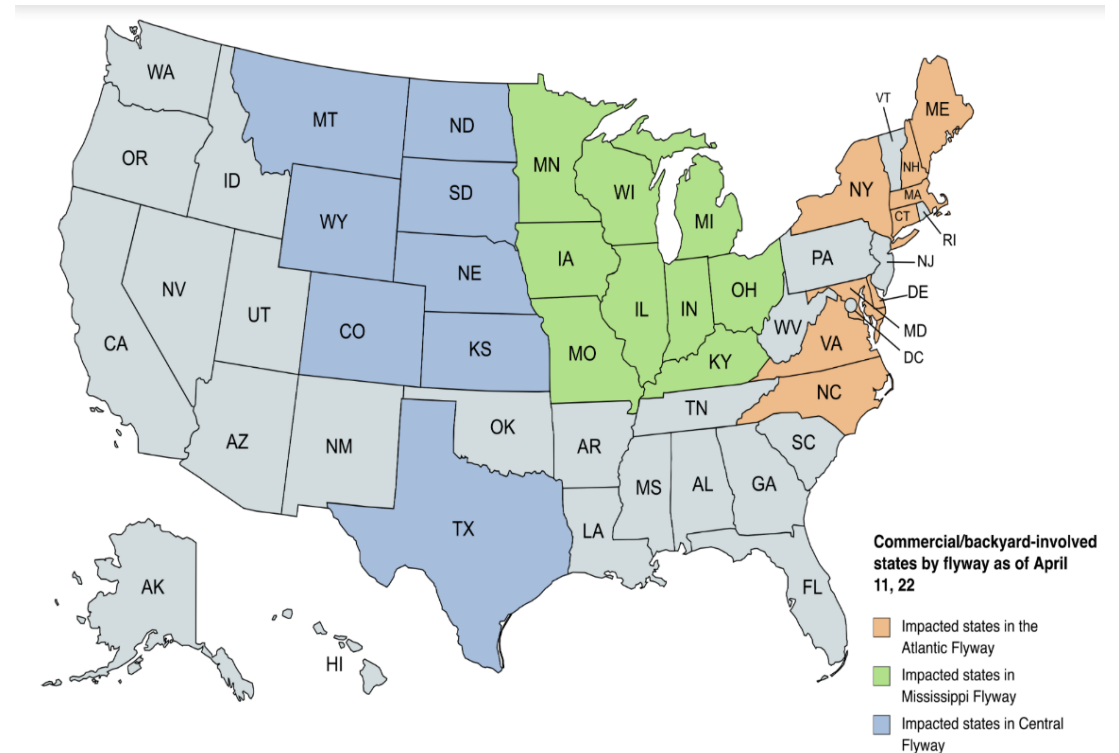
- Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) A H5N1 transmitted from wild waterfowl (reservoir) to commercial or backyard poultry (and, potentially, people)
- Avian influenza (H5N1, H7N9) outbreaks among people in China
- Human infections with swine “variant” flu viruses from U.S. agricultural fairs

Huge economic impacts as well (commercial poultry depopulation)



# Current HPAI H5N1 in the United States

- USDA has a strong surveillance program to detect HPAI in commercial and wild birds
- So far, 160 flocks infected with HPAI H5N1 in 26 states (104 were commercial)
- More than 24 million commercial chickens and turkeys were depopulated.
- No cases of human HPAI H5N1 have been detected in the US (now or ever, but we monitor...)



# HPAI Preparedness in Georgia

- Agribusiness is Georgia's leading industry (and broilers are the most valuable agricultural asset in our state)
- Years of planning for HPAI with many partners
  - Georgia DPH
  - Georgia Poultry Laboratory Network
  - State and Federal Agriculture (GDA, DNR, USDA)
  - Industry, UGA
  - Healthcare providers
- DPH's primary role is to monitor persons exposed to affected birds (employees, responders) for ILI (modified electronic system) and provide testing for H5N1 infections

## PREPARING FOR HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI) IN GEORGIA

### What should I do if I work with birds?



**Get your annual flu shot.**  
The flu shot does not prevent avian influenza, but can protect you against seasonal flu.



**If you work with an infected flock,** you should monitor your health for 10 days after the last day you came in contact with sick birds.



**Public Health will work with you or someone** at your facility to provide instructions on how to monitor your health and how to get tested for influenza if you develop symptoms.



**If you have been around birds infected with HPAI** and you experience any symptoms in the list to the right, you should call Public Health immediately so we can help get you tested. You can reach us 24 hours a day at 866-PUB-HLTH (782-4584).



**If you are sick and feel that you need to seek immediate medical treatment,** please let your doctor or healthcare provider know that you are experiencing illness after working with birds with avian influenza. Call Public Health or ask your doctor to call us.



For more information on DPH's planning for avian influenza, please visit <https://dph.georgia.gov/avian-influenza> or call 866-PUB-HLTH (866-782-4584).

### Signs and Symptoms

- Fever ( $\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$  [ $38^{\circ}\text{C}$ ])
- Chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sneezing
- Shortness of breath
- Eye irritation
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Rash
- Headaches

## PREPARING FOR HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI) IN GEORGIA

The risk to humans is low, however it can infect people.

### HOW HPAI CAN SPREAD TO HUMANS



Direct contact with infected birds

OR



Contact with birds that have died from avian influenza

OR

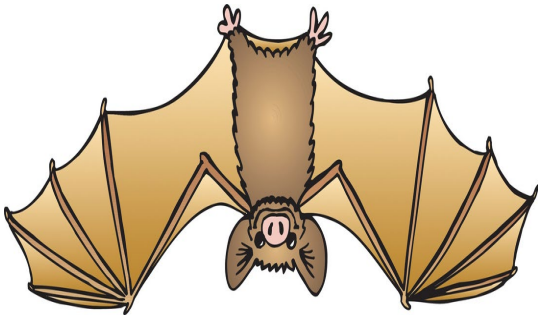


Contact with bird droppings or litter from infected birds

# Closing Comments

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1. Infectious diseases are Ever-changing and unpredictable!
2. **Surveillance** (global, local, animal, human) is the cornerstone of prevention and control recommendations.





# Questions

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For more information, please contact:

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# Commissioner's Closing Remarks

Board of Public Health / Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H. / April 12, 2022

# Next Meeting

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The next Board of Public Health meeting will be held May 10, 2022.