



February 8, 2021

The Honorable Greg Dolezal
Chair
Senate Committee on Science
and Technology
The Georgia State Capitol
121-G State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

The Honorable Brandon Beach
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Science
and Technology
The Georgia State Capitol
121-G State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Internet Association Supports Georgia's Digital Service Transformation Efforts Through SB53

Dear Chair Dolezal and Vice Chair Beach:

Internet Association (IA) represents over 40 of the world's leading internet companies and supports policies that promote and enable internet innovation, including commercial cloud solutions. Our member companies are global leaders in the drive to develop lower cost, more secure, innovative, and most importantly, enjoyable, digital government services, with a focus on both the civil servants delivering those services and the residents receiving them. On behalf of our members, I am writing to thank you for your consideration of [Senate Bill 53](#) (SB53), which will provide the [Georgia Technology Authority](#) (GTA) the authority to create a modern and resident-focused user experience for all Georgians, and we encourage you to pass it along with a few suggested amendments to the proposed language.

Building on the success and hard work of all the teams in GTA and the Office of [Digital Services Georgia](#) (DSGa)¹, SB53 will give every state agency and department the kind of support they need to continue with their part of the statewide IT modernization effort. The bill gives Georgia the mandate to develop a common digital experience and user interface - an essential component of delivering services in the digital, remote-first *present* we find ourselves in - while also giving the state a strong argument to say that they are future-proofing themselves for whatever may come in the following years as well.

In particular, SB53 will help DSGa's nationally recognized [Georgia GovHub](#) platform² continue to improve the ability of state employees to create what promises to be one of the nation's most accessible, easiest to use, and impactful "brands" in the entire public sector.

Visiting Georgia.gov right now, whether on a phone or a computer, shows exactly what every other service in the state could, and perhaps should, have - a warm and welcoming page, that works on any device, with a welcoming question³: "**How can we help you?**"

¹ Not just the efforts outlined in the [Georgia Annual IT Report FY2020](#), but the [day-to-day work](#) as well.

² As one example among many, Georgia GovHub was highlighted at [DrupalCon Global 2020](#), arguably the biggest global event in the [Drupal](#) community, in [this Case Study](#).

³ Much of this is due to Georgia having one of the few statewide design systems in [Orchard](#).



Imagine if a resident desperate for [unemployment assistance](#) or [shelter](#) due to pandemic-related problems saw that message. Imagine if an entrepreneur looking to [start a new business](#) in the state, taking advantage of Georgia's strong technical workforce saw that message. Whether for those down on their luck or on the up-and-up, SB53 will provide what everyone is looking for from their government, no matter what their situation is: a little bit of help and a little bit of consistency.

As you may have noticed from the variety of links throughout this letter, Georgia's state websites all look and feel different right now. SB53 will be a large step forward in fixing this problem by giving GTA the necessary authority to bring every agency and department up with them and the rest of the folks who have already benefited from the help of DSGa.

We also applaud the drafters of this bill for recognizing that a citizen-centric approach requires digital services to be available and accessible to all, regardless of the device or the assistive technologies they may use. With a few minor but important changes, this bill can provide programs throughout the state the flexibility and authority they will need to take advantage of recent advances in technology as well.

This includes benefits provided through: the use of artificial intelligence chatbots that are available 24/7; machine learning tools that help quickly spot customer service issues before they become major problems; robotic process automation techniques to automate application submission and review processes; and, a multitude of other technologies focused on providing personalized experiences, all available as standalone commercial cloud-based solutions or through public cloud service providers.

With your support and inclusion of these suggested changes in the final version of the SB53, everyone in the Peach State will be able to take advantage of all the services the state has to offer, in a seamless and consistent fashion, whether they are on the road or in the comfort of their own home.

We appreciate your time in considering SB53 and look forward to the opportunity to discuss the benefits of the bill with you in further detail.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Hines'.

James Hines
Director, Government Affairs, Southern Region

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Omid Ghaffari-Tabrizi'.

Omid Ghaffari-Tabrizi,
Director, Cloud Policy

Cc: The Honorable Chuck Hufstetler
The Honorable John Albers
The Honorable Gloria Butler
The Honorable Billy Hickman
The Honorable Kay Kirkpatrick
The Honorable Bruce Thompson

Attachment: SB53 with suggested additions

Senate Bill 53

By: Senators Hufstetler of the 52nd, Albers of the 56th, Butler of the 55th, Hickman of the 4th, Kirkpatrick of the 32nd and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

To amend Chapter 25 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the Georgia Technology Authority, so as to provide such authority with the power and duty to establish standards for state agencies' website design, navigation, and accessibility; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

Chapter 25 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the Georgia Technology Authority, is amended in subsection (a) of Code Section 50-25-4, relating to general powers, by revising paragraphs (31) and (32) and adding a new paragraph to read as follows:

"(31) To coordinate the establishment and administration of one or more programs to increase economic, educational, and social opportunities for citizens and businesses through the promotion of the deployment of broadband services and other emerging communications technologies throughout the state and to exercise any power granted to the authority in Chapter 40 of this title; ~~and~~

(32) To establish and enforce website design, navigation, and accessibility specifications and standards that shall apply to all agency websites; and

~~(32)~~(33) To do all things necessary or convenient to carry out the powers conferred by this chapter."

SECTION 2.

Said chapter is further amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

"50-25-7.14. 23

The authority shall coordinate with all agencies to develop website design, navigation, and accessibility specifications and standards that shall include, but shall not be limited to:

- (1) Accessibility for individuals with disabilities in accordance with any applicable state or federal laws;
- (2) Consistency with applicable state and federal government security protocols;
- (3) Design selections centered around user goals, needs, and behaviors with continual data-driven analysis influencing management and development decisions;
- (4) Utilization and implementation of cloud-native technologies, including but not limited to artificial intelligence, machine learning, and robotic process automation, that creates a more customized digital experience and that allows users to complete digital transactions in an efficient, safe, and accurate manner; and
- (5) Full functionality and usability on common mobile devices."

SECTION 3.

All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.