



# Weekly Legislative Update

4.21.23

Dear {{FirstName}},

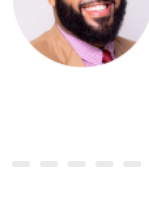
A more tumultuous-than-usual legislative session is widely expected to adjourn this evening, signaling an end to the first year of the two-year 113th Tennessee General Assembly. Key to the imminent adjournment is the successful passage of the state's FY2024 budget on each chamber's floor, which the House passed on a 94-5 vote on Wednesday and the Senate passed 33-0 yesterday. Some education-related investments in the \$56.2 billion budget include \$1.1 billion toward the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement, or TISA, the state's new school funding formula, \$7.65 million recurring for the closely watched [HB437/SB300](#), the state's recently-passed literacy retention bill, and \$8 million toward expanding behavioral and mental health offerings in schools. Some more controversial items included in the budget include \$140 million for school resource officers in public schools (with an additional \$7 million to offer state funding through grants to place officers in private schools), \$2 million in one-time funding for yet another audit of Tennessee State University, our state's only public historically Black college or university (HBCU), and nearly \$100K to implement [HB158/SB102](#), which prohibits public P-12 LEAs and higher education institutions from requiring educators to participate in implicit bias trainings. For line-by-line details of fiscal items and legislation that secured funding in the state's new budget, please review the [House](#), [Senate](#), and [Administration](#) budget amendments.

Education savings accounts (ESAs), one of the Lee Administration's central education priorities over his two terms, continued to draw the attention of lawmakers this week as the legislature concludes its 2023 business. An amended [HB433](#), which would expand the state's ESA program to additional LEAs including Hamilton and Knox, passed the House on a 57-35 vote on Wednesday, with four Republicans legislators marking themselves as present, not voting. The Senate version of the bill, which only sought to expand the contested program to Chattanooga-area Hamilton County Schools, passed in mid February on 19-6 vote. That measure, however, saw all three members of Knox Co.'s Senate delegation abstain, with noted opposition to the proposed expansion into Knoxville's public schools. Advocates will continue to watch developments on this bill, its implications for public schools in Tennessee, and which districts are ultimately impacted by the expansion.

Further, Capitol watchers noted additional debates and final votes around retention, with advocates and educators posing relevant concerns about how the proposed law will affect students currently in the third grade. The bill, once signed into law, will implement changes that go into effect for the 2023-24 school year, serving as a point of confusion for many parents and educators. The legislation, which passed the Senate 26-4 on Tuesday and the House 82-15 yesterday, will now head to the governor's desk for approval. Changes to the law include additional data tracking and reporting to the legislature, tutoring supports for retained students, and mechanisms for students who score "approaching" on the TCAP and in at least the 50th percentile on benchmark testing to advance to the fourth grade under specific conditions, among other changes. For Ed Trust TN's ongoing analysis of retention legislation, please check out our recently-updated [Retention Legislative Tracker](#) and [Cost of Retention Memo](#). In other news, [HB1202](#), which would permit educators to carry concealed weapons in Tennessee's public schools, was "held on the desk," delaying action on the bill for the time being. The move comes as protestors continue to descend on the State Capitol seeking additional gun control reforms amid the Governor's [call for legislative action](#), a request that it appears will go unheeded by the Republican-controlled General Assembly prior to adjournment. Some advocates and lawmakers have called for a special session on the issue of gun control, though if that will come to pass remains to be seen.

Though the 2023 legislative session is moving towards its close, Ed Trust TN will continue to remain an active advocacy partner and informative resource for education equity and justice issues across Tennessee. Please continue to reference our bill tracker linked below, and feel free to reach out to me or any member of [our team](#) should we be able to be of assistance in the months ahead.

In partnership,



**Reggie Nash**  
Assistant Director, External Relations for Tennessee



## On Our Radar

### [HB1295 / SB0884](#)

Rep. Camper / Sen. Akbari

As introduced, requires the commissioner of education to report on the academic performance of historically underserved student groups to the education committee of the senate and the education administration and education instruction committees of the house of representatives by January 31 of each year.

### [HB0433 / SB0012](#)

Rep. White / Sen. Gardenhire

As introduced, expands the eligibility criteria for an education savings account to include students zoned to attend a school in an LEA with at least five schools, instead of at least 10, identified as being in the bottom 10 percent of schools in 2017 and identified as priority schools in the 2015, 2018, and 2021 priority school cycles.

### [HB0995 / SB0972](#)

Rep. Lynn / Sen. Hensley

As introduced, clarifies that a communication made in an electronic format in which a parent of a child with a disability gives permission for the use of corporal punishment against the child constitutes permission given in writing such that the chief administrative officer, or the chief administrative officer's designee, may administer such corporal punishment to the child in accordance with the LEA's discipline policy.

### [HB1202 / SB1325](#)

Rep. Williams / Sen. Bailey

As introduced, authorizes a faculty or staff member of a school to carry a concealed handgun on school grounds subject to certain conditions, including obtaining an enhanced handgun carry permit and completing annual training.

[Review Our Bill Tracker](#)



## What's Happening

Committees are currently closed for the 2023 legislative session of the 113th Tennessee General Assembly. We will monitor for any changes that may occur prior to adjournment.

[House Committee Calendars](#)

[Senate Committee Calendars](#)



## Noteworthy

### [Article: Chalkbeat TN, Tennessee legislature dismisses gun bills in rush to adjourn, defying protests after school shooting.](#)

Check out [this article](#) from Chalkbeat TN about the Tennessee legislature's race to complete business on Thursday while refusing to take up Governor Lee's gun reform legislation. [Read more.](#)

### [Article: Chalkbeat TN, Bill to extend private school vouchers to Hamilton and Knox counties clears Tennessee House](#)

Check out [this article](#) from Chalkbeat TN about the [bill](#) to expand vouchers to Hamilton and Knox counties, which passed in the House on Wednesday. [Read more.](#)

### [Article: Chalkbeat TN, Changes in Tennessee retention law will come too late for third graders this year](#)

Check out [this article](#) from Chalkbeat TN about 3rd grade retention. Lawmakers are still considering changes, but will not impact students before the end of the 2023 school year. [Read more.](#)

### [Article: The Tennessean, New bill: Gov. Lee backs new gun-reform legislation in 11th-hour push](#)

Check out [this article](#) from The Tennessean about new gun reform legislation Governor Bill Lee is backing. It would allow courts and law enforcement to temporarily remove firearms from individuals for up to 180 days if a judge finds that the person poses a "current and ongoing" risk of serious harm to themselves or others. [Read more.](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[Check Out Our Policy Agenda](#)



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