



# Weekly Legislative Update

01.12.24

Dear {{FirstName or 'Friend'}},

We are officially back in session! The 2024 legislative session of the 113th TN General Assembly kicked off on Tuesday, January 9, at noon. Both the House and Senate met in their respective chambers to conduct business. Both chambers also released their bill filing deadlines. The House deadline is January 31, and for the Senate it is February 1.

Captivating the House this week was a committee discussion and subsequent floor vote on amendments to the [House Rules](#). These rules govern parliamentary procedure, the length of debates, and members' conduct while on the House Floor. Additionally, there was much debate on the new system restricting the [public's access](#) to the House chamber. The new House Rules passed 70-19.

The House Finance, Ways, and Means Committee met on opening day to hear an [update](#) on the K-12 Mental Health Trust Fund from the Department of Treasury. [Passed by the TN General Assembly in 2021](#), the \$250 million K-12 Mental Health Trust Fund was designed to finance behavioral and mental health trainings, programming, and interventions for K-12 school staff and students through competitive grants. State of Tennessee Treasurer, David Lillard, provided a timeline of the fund's activities, an overview of the health of the fund, and an explanation for a seeming [loss of funds](#).

Additionally, on Tuesday, the highly anticipated [report](#) from the Senators appointed to the Joint Working Group on Federal Education Funds was published. Notably, the House and the Senate were not able to come to an agreement on recommendations. The report provides an overview of the federal funding that Tennessee receives, laws and requirements associated with federal funds, a discussion about the feasibility of Tennessee rejecting federal funds, and how to eliminate unwanted restrictions.

On Wednesday, January 10, the Senate Education Committee heard an [update](#) from Commissioner Lizzette Gonzalez Reynolds, TN Department of Education, on the implementation of the major education policies that passed through the General Assembly in recent years. Legislators engaged in substantive discussions around the implications of the 3rd grade retention law on 4th graders, TISA allocations, expanding the [public dashboard](#) for A-F school grade letters, and the current ESA program. In her presentation, Commissioner Reynolds noted that Governor Lee's 2024 universal voucher proposal will not replace TN's current ESA program.

To learn more about Governor Lee's universal voucher proposal, I invite you to join The Education Trust - Tennessee on Wednesday, January 24, at 4:00 - 5:00 PM CT / 5:00 - 6:00 PM ET, for our virtual event, [Vouchers and Education Savings Accounts: The Right Choice for Tennessee?](#)

As we begin this long weekend honoring the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I hope that you are able to reflect on the power of advocacy and feel inspired to continue the work ahead.



**MaKenzie L. Mosby, MPP**  
Senior Manager of Government Relations for Tennessee



## On Our Radar

### [HB1803](#)

Rep. Butler

As introduced, clarifies when a student must be enrolled in an eligible postsecondary program to be eligible to receive a Tennessee Promise scholarship.

### [HB1709 / SB1718](#)

Rep. Cepicky / Sen. Hensley

As introduced, authorizes LEAs and public charter schools to reimburse teachers for child care expenses paid by the teacher each month for the teacher's dependent child to receive child care services through a child care program certified by the department of education or a child care agency licensed by the department of human services; requires, subject to appropriation, this state to reimburse LEAs and public charter schools a portion of any such monthly reimbursement amount paid by the LEA or public charter school

### [HB1797 / SB1691](#)

Rep. Carringer / Sen. Pody

As introduced, requires the public high school in which the public high school student member of the state board of education is enrolled to count the student as present for time the student spends performing the student's duties as a member of the state board of education.

### [HB1699 / SB1665](#)

Rep. Stevens / Sen. White

As introduced, requires local boards of education to include school safety training in the training requirements for substitute teachers.

[Review Our Bill Tracker](#)



## What's Happening

### House Education Administration

Wednesday, 1/17/24, 1:30pm  
House Hearing Room I | [Committee Homepage](#)

[House Committee Calendars](#)

[Senate Committee Calendars](#)



## Noteworthy

### Article: Tennessee legislature is coming back to work: 10 key groups to watch in the new session

Check out [this article](#) from The Tennessean about key groups to pay attention to this legislative session. At the top of this list are education leaders and school choice lobbyists, naming specifically House Education Administration Committee Chair [Mark White](#), House Education Instruction Committee Chair [Debra Moody](#), and Senate Education Committee Chair [Jon Lundberg](#), as the most powerful players.

[Read more](#)

### Report: The State of the Child in Tennessee

The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth released its annual overview of children's well-being this week. The [report](#) covers numerous factors and topics in order to best represent the whole child.

[Read more](#)

### Article: Tennessee senators' report highlights risks of rejecting federal education funding

Check out [this article](#) in Chalkbeat Tennessee that discusses the recently released [report](#) by the Tennessee Senate members that served on the joint working group on federal education funding.

[Read more](#)

### Webinar: Vouchers and Education Savings Accounts: The Right Choice for Tennessee?

Join The Education Trust – Tennessee to learn about Governor Lee's effort to expand vouchers across Tennessee. on Wednesday, January 24th from 4:00 - 5:00 PM CT. Our panelists will break down the differences between vouchers and education savings accounts, review the proposed voucher legislation in TN, and explore the fiscal implications for districts and for the state.

[Register](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[Legislative Advocacy Hub](#)

