



Weekly Legislative Update

01.26.24

Dear {{FirstName or 'Friend'}},

With the snow week behind them and bill filing deadline ahead, Tennessee's lawmakers returned to the State Capitol ready to get back into action. This week, three of the House Education Committees and the Senate Education Committee convened in their respective chambers to review committee rules and procedures, hear presentations and reports from state departments and advocacy organizations, and debate legislation.

The House K-12 Subcommittee considered a short but significant calendar this week that included bills responding to the tragic mass shooting at the Covenant School ([HB 1644](#) by House Majority Leader William [Lamberth](#)), the rise in attention to artificial intelligence policies in public schools, colleges, and universities ([HB 1630](#) by Rep. Scott [Cepicky](#)), and the state of math achievement, math teacher development, and ongoing professional development for math teachers ([HB 1655](#) by Rep. Scott [Cepicky](#)). If passed into law, HB 1644, HB 1630, and HB 1655 will create major education policies for local districts and the state of Tennessee. All 3 bills received favorable votes, passed out of subcommittee, and head to the House Education Administration Committee next week.

Three groups shared reports with members of the House Education Administration Committee this week, including advocates from the STEM Education Day on the Hill. Tennessee's Commission on Children and Youth presented their [2023 State of the Child](#) and highlighted their findings around child poverty, mental health, education infrastructure, and child care & early education. Last on the agenda was a panel of state-level disability practitioners who shared existing resources that schools can use to support students with behavioral needs. Shoutout to the [Tennessee Disability Coalition](#), a member of the [TN Alliance for Equity in Education](#), for coordinating this group of experts.

The Senate Education Committee heard the Office of Education Research and Accountability (OREA) December 2023 [report on graduation and dropout rates](#) for Tennessee's high schoolers. Chairman Lundberg also announced that the Universal School Freedom Act will be filed on Monday, January 29 by Senate Majority Leader Jack Johnson. This bill will contain the language for Governor Lee's highly-anticipated universal voucher program. To learn more about the current voucher programs in Tennessee, please check out Ed Trust TN's voucher [memo](#). The memo will be updated as we have an analysis of the bill language. If you missed our virtual voucher event this week, please check out our [webinar recording](#), the [powerpoint slides](#), and the [voucher resource guide](#).

To close out the legislative week, House members appointed to the Joint Working Group on Federal Education Funding released their [80 page-report](#) on Thursday. Their recommendations include presenting new federal rules, guidance, and directives impacting education to the House Government Operations committee, an evaluation of food waste in Tennessee's public schools, and annual hearings on federal testing requirements.

As we move further into session and begin to engage in advocacy campaigns, I invite you to join the Education Trust Tennessee to learn more about [Effective Legislator Engagement through our Gearing Up for the Legislative Session](#) series on Monday, February 5 at 4pm-5pm CT. Attendees will learn how to identify key legislators for advocacy efforts, effectively schedule and plan legislative meetings, and build meaningful relationships with legislators. Attendees will also learn to "power map", which is a strategy to identify who has power to influence a specific issue, at the local & state level in Tennessee. Hope to see you there!

Hope you have a restful weekend!

In partnership,



MaKenzie L. Mosby, MPP

Senior Manager of Government Relations for Tennessee



On Our Radar

[HB1605/SB1722](#)

Rep. Bulso / Sen. Hensley

As introduced, prohibits LEAs and public charter schools from displaying in public schools flags other than the official United States flag and the official Tennessee state flag.

[HB0670/SB0712](#)

Rep. Cepicky / Sen. Hensley

As introduced, requires a student to be seven years of age or older on or before August 15 or test proficient in the kindergarten academic standards based on a first-grade entry assessment before the student may be promoted to the first grade; requires the department of education to create, and local education agencies and public charter schools to administer, a first-grade entry assessment.

[HB1627/SB1589](#)

Rep. Lynn / Sen. Pody

As introduced, requires the department to award school safety grants to LEAs, public charter schools, private schools, and church-related schools for the purchase of a wearable emergency alert system for teachers and substitute teachers.

[HB1632/SB1858](#)

Rep. Bulso / Sen. Haile

As introduced, gives a parent of a child who attends, or who is eligible to attend, a school operated by a local education agency or a public charter school standing to file a civil action against the LEA or public charter school in a chancery court of competent jurisdiction to enforce the Age-Appropriate Materials Act of 2022.

[Review Our Bill Tracker](#)



What's Happening

House Floor Session

Monday, 1/29/24, 4:00pm
House Chamber | [House Homepage](#)

House Higher Education Subcommittee

Monday, 1/29/24, 3:30pm
House Hearing Room II | [Committee Homepage](#)

House K-12 Subcommittee

Tuesday, 1/30/24, 4:30pm
House Hearing Room II | [Committee Homepage](#)

House Floor Session

Wednesday, 1/31/24, 9:00am
House Chamber | [House Homepage](#)

House Education Instruction Subcommittee

Wednesday, 1/31/24, 12:00pm
House Hearing Room III | [Committee Homepage](#)

House Education Administration Committee

Wednesday, 1/31/24, 1:30pm
House Hearing Room I | [Committee Homepage](#)

Senate Education Committee

Wednesday, 1/31/24, 3:00pm
Senate Hearing Room I | [Committee Homepage](#)

House Floor Session

Thursday, 2/1/24, 9:00am
House Chamber | [House Homepage](#)

[House Committee Calendars](#)

[Senate Committee Calendars](#)



Noteworthy

Webinar: Effective Legislator Engagement

Join The Education Trust - Tennessee on Monday, February 5th from 4:00 - 5:00 PM CT / 5:00 - 6:00 PM ET for a Gearing Up Advocacy Training on how to identify key legislators for advocacy efforts, effectively schedule and plan legislative meetings, and build meaningful relationships with legislators. [Kelli Nowers](#), Executive Director of [AWAKE](#) (Advocates for Women's & Kids' Equality) will share best practices and example scenarios with legislators at the TN General Assembly based on their advocacy experiences navigating Tennessee's political context.

[Register here](#)

Report: AWAKE Advocacy Toolkit

Check out [AWAKE's Advocacy Toolkit](#) microsite. This site is dedicated to all things legislative advocacy and will be an excellent resource during this year's legislative session.

[Learn more](#)

Webinar: Stand Against Injustice - Redrawing Democracy

Join the [YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee](#) on January 31, 2024 at 12:00 PM CT when they gather a panel of local and national experts to discuss gerrymandering, racism, and voting rights in Tennessee.

[Register here](#)

Report: Tennessee Promise Evaluation

The [Tennessee Comptroller's](#) latest evaluation of the [Tennessee Promise program](#) shows that Promise students are earning more credits, are retained, and earn awards at higher rates than non-Promise students who enroll at the same schools. The Comptroller's [report](#) offers several policy options that may help increase access to Promise, retention of Promise students, and higher credential attainment.

[Read more](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[Legislative Advocacy Hub](#)

