

Status Update:

Legislative Threat to Education for All

[HB 1710/SB 1915](#) Rep. Powers/Sen. Jackson

February 26, 2026

Introduced in 2026, [HB 1710/SB 1915](#) threatens access to public benefits for undocumented individuals by requiring local government entities to verify individuals who seek a public benefit. It does not amend Title 49 (the education part of TN code), but postsecondary education is one of many examples of a public benefit that this bill jeopardizes.

Legislative Path

- The bill is scheduled to be heard by the State and Local Government Committee in the House on Wednesday, March 4, 2026.
- In the Senate, the bill was also referred to the State and Local Government Committee but has not yet been calendared.
- For both the House and Senate, the bill must additionally pass the Finance, Ways, and Means Committee and a full floor vote.
- There are no amendments at this time, thus the Senate and House versions of the bill are the same. As a final step, the bill must be signed into law by Governor Lee.

For more information about protecting undocumented student access to public school, check out the [Education for All — Tennessee](#) campaign.

<p><u>Originally Filed Version in the House and Senate</u></p> <p><i>Key Provisions</i></p>	<p>Analysis</p>
<p>Adds local government entities to the list of bodies required to verify applicants (18 years or older) applying for public benefits.</p> <p>Local government entities are prohibited from offering to provide federal, state, or local public benefits if applicants are found ineligible after verification.</p>	<p>Added as a new section to Eligibility Verification for Entitlements Act (EVEA) section of TN code.</p> <p>Postsecondary education, adult education, and career and technical education programs are a few examples of public benefits subject to Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA)'s restrictions on immigrant eligibility or verification. Thus, undocumented individuals seeking to apply for the above-mentioned benefits would be subject to verification.</p> <p>Head Start was recently reclassified as a federal public benefit as well, but it is unclear if it remains exempt from immigration restrictions given it is often administered via nonprofit organizations.</p>
<p>Local government entities must update documents and phone systems so that applicants must attest they are a U.S. citizen or a qualified immigrant.</p> <p>For those claiming U.S. citizenship to access benefits, they must present one form of acceptable identification.</p> <p>For those claiming qualified immigrant status to access benefits, they must present two forms of acceptable identification and status for verification through SAVE or SEVIS.</p>	<p>Currently, only three local agencies are registered with SAVE which is necessary to verify applicants via this legislation.</p> <p>Agencies not accustomed to the verification process will need to become familiar with the necessary documentation or risk either turning away eligible recipients or adding substantial time to the verification process.</p>
<p>Requires local government entities to file a complaint alleging a criminal violation if an individual is found to have falsely claimed eligibility for public benefits and makes the individual liable.</p> <p>Authorizes the attorney general to investigate those seeking benefits and the local government entities for violations of verification requirements.</p>	<p>Local government entities found in violation of this legislation risk the attorney general withholding state allocated funds.</p>
<p>Local government entities must submit monthly reports to the General Assembly, the Department of Finance and Administration, and immigration enforcement.</p> <p>Failure to submit a report to immigration enforcement is a Class A misdemeanor.</p>	<p>Reports include counts of individuals that applied for a benefit and were deemed unqualified and counts of unqualified individuals who has their benefit terminated.</p> <p>State and local entities also have to report the names of unqualified individuals who receive public benefits to immigration enforcement.</p> <p>Fear of reporting will likely turn some eligible individuals away from receiving benefits.</p>