

Status Update:

Legislative Threat to Education for All

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

March 9, 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.

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

Question about this resource? Contact Nikkolette Hunter at nhunter@edtrust.org

<p>Originally Filed Version in the House and Senate</p> <p><i>Key Provisions</i></p>	<p>Analysis</p>
<p>Local government entities must verify applicants (18 years or older) applying for public benefits and are prohibited from offering benefits if applicants are found to be unlawfully present after verification.</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. 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 as to require applicants to attest they are a U.S. citizen or a qualified immigrant. Applicants must also provide acceptable identification and status documentation for verification.</p>	<p>There are administrative costs to updating systems. Additionally, verification would have to happen through SAVE or SEVIS. Currently, only three local agencies are registered with SAVE.</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.</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 had 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>