



Dear Tennessee General Assembly,

Every Tennessee student deserves access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their background, zip code, or family income. For every student to reach their full potential, schools must be equipped to support all levels of student need, whether providing healthy meals, counseling, or academic support. To do so, we need to fund schools based on their unique needs.

Currently, Tennessee is undercounting and underfunding students from low-income backgrounds by relying primarily on SNAP (food assistance) and TANF (cash assistance) to identify economically disadvantaged students. By relying primarily on SNAP and TANF, the state misses thousands of students in our schools who are eligible for support. This means students who need support may not be counted, and funding gaps could widen. That's what [HB 2485/SB 2385](#) aims to fix.

HB 2485/SB 2385 would strengthen Tennessee's economically disadvantaged definition by including students already identified through Medicaid, known in Tennessee as TennCare.

Tennessee already uses TennCare to determine eligibility for free and reduced-price meals. Expanding its use in the economically disadvantaged definition builds on the existing system and provides a more accurate picture of who is in our classrooms.

Public education is one of the strongest commitments we make to our communities and one of the state's most important investments. How states define student poverty is a policy choice, and Tennessee's leaders have the power to get it right.

When funding reflects real enrollment and real need, schools are better equipped to deliver strong results, and students, families, and communities across Tennessee are better positioned to thrive.

Sincerely,

