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Update: Over Fifty Percent of Tennessee County Mayors Call for the Return of Summer EBT

Nashville, TN, Feb. 18, 2026 – Fifty-three (53) Tennessee county mayors, over half of the state, have signed a letter urging Governor Lee and the Tennessee Department of Human Services (T-DHS) to reduce hunger in Tennessee by bringing back Summer EBT (S-EBT), a federal summer anti-hunger program, in 2026. S-EBT provides a modest amount of money— \$120 per child— for the entire summer, for families to buy food for eligible school-aged children while school is out. This helps bridge the gap for children who receive free or reduced-price meals during the school year.

The S-EBT program served 700,000 Tennessee children in 2024. Governor Lee opted out of the program in 2025, stripping support away from Tennessee children and their families as grocery prices increase and the affordability crisis persists in 2026. TJC, alongside community advocates and partners, advocated for the program's return in Summer 2025 and again for 2026.

Signe Anderson, the Tennessee Justice Center's Senior Director of Nutrition Advocacy, said, "Tennessee still has time to join Summer EBT. Our mayors see the reality on the ground and want a solution that feeds kids while making life more affordable for hardworking parents. Supporting Summer EBT isn't just about nutrition; it's about health for our kids, setting kids up to success in school, and it's an investment in our local economy. With Tennessee among only 11 non-participating states, it's time to step up and put Tennessee families first."

Mayors from 53 of the 95 counties have endorsed the S-EBT program's return for 2026, encouraging the Governor to act: *Bedford, Bradley, Campbell, Cannon, Carter, Chester, Claiborne, Clay, Coffee, Crockett, Davidson, Dyer, Fentress, Franklin, Gibson, Grainger,*

Greene, Grundy, Hamilton, Hancock, Hardeman, Hawkins, Haywood, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Marion, Marshall, Maury, McNairy, Monroe, Moore, Morgan, Pickett, Polk, Rhea, Roane, Shelby, Smith, Stewart, Sullivan, Trousdale, Unicoi, Van Buren, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Weakley, White, Wilson

Mayors can still sign-onto the letter! *Contact your Tennessee county mayor and encourage them to support the return of Summer EBT in 2026. Mayors who want to support families and end summer hunger can sign on here: <https://forms.office.com/r/EyNheNxjPq>*

The fight to secure Summer EBT for Tennessee children in 2026 is not over. Most states, including our neighbors in Alabama, Kentucky, and Arkansas, are providing this support to their families. See the map of states that are participating in 2026 [here](#).

Urge Governor Lee to end summer hunger and bring back Summer EBT in 2026. TJC has resources at tnjustice.org/antihunger for individuals to advocate for S-EBT and food security in Tennessee.

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About Tennessee Justice Center / www.tnjustice.org For over 30 years, the Tennessee Justice Center has been standing with vulnerable Tennessee families and helping them access basic necessities of life. Since opening our doors in 1996, TJC has used lawsuits, legislation and coalition building to overcome injustice, winning \$2 billion in health care and hundreds of millions in financial and nutrition assistance for Tennesseans. Aside from lawsuits, TJC helps assist seniors and other individuals with TennCare, SNAP and other public benefit programs.