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Child Hunger Bill Comes Down to the Wire

Nashville, TN, April 6, 2026 – An alliance of teachers, county mayors, pediatricians, food banks and faith leaders are waiting to see if federal food aid known as Summer EBT (S-EBT) will reach 700,000 low-income Tennessee kids this summer. The legislature has unanimously approved the [S-EBT bill](#) (HB1835/SB1911) in each committee it has moved through, which directs the state to accept and distribute federal nutrition assistance over the summer to children who qualify for free or low-cost school meals.

This bill would reduce hunger among Tennessee children and stimulate the economy. Senator Paul Bailey, the bill's Senate sponsor, points out that the bill would bring \$84 million in federal funding into the state economy, helping to sustain grocery stores in rural and other communities.

Gov. Bill Lee proposed a state program for the second year which only served 18,000 children in 15 of Tennessee's 95 counties, just a fraction of those who would be served by S-EBT. The S-EBT bill that is currently moving through the legislature would instead replace the state program and supplement those dollars to help draw down federal funds so the program could reach the 700,000 Tennessee children served by S-EBT across all 95 counties.

As the legislative session winds down, the question is whether the legislature will fund the cost of distributing the federal food aid. "There is bipartisan agreement that S-EBT is good for kids, their families, and our state. We are counting on legislators to fund the bill and on the Governor to do the right thing. Remove the barriers," said Signe Anderson, Senior Director of Nutrition Advocacy at the Tennessee Justice Center. "Tennessee has the money. It's a question of priorities."

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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 \$8 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.