

Hamilton County Department of Education  
Legislative Meeting  
December 11, 2023 6:00 PM  
3074 Hickory Valley Road  
Chattanooga, TN 37421

I. Call to Order - Mr. Ben Connor, Tennessee Legislative Representative

II. Public Comment

A. Jeanetta Omarkhail, President of HCEA

III. Review Items

A. TN State Policy on School Letter Grades

B. Teacher Licensure and Educator Pipelines

C. Improving and Expanding School Safety Measures

D. Accepting Federal Education Funding

E. TN State Policy on School Vouchers

F. Support Strategies Proven to Impact K-12 Student Success

IV. Additional Items for Review not Previously Submitted

V. Adjourn

## Tennessee State Policy on School Letter Grades

HCBBoE encourages the General Assembly to amend TCA 49-1-228 to give schools a 1-5 score instead of an A-F letter grade and to require that the scoring formula be approved by the TSBA.

We urge the GA to require that TDOE equally balance the weight of student achievement and growth indicators, and to balance target and absolute measures in the achievement sub-score.

## Teacher Licensure and Educator Pipelines

Remove the PRAXIS requirement to renew or advance practitioner licenses initially obtained out of state; decrease PRAXIS score thresholds in high-need content areas (i.e. Early Childhood, SPED K-12, ESL, Mathematics 6-12, and Science); and increase flexibility of licensure to reduce shortages in key endorsements bound by grade bands, such as Pre-K.

Support policies that reimburse educators seeking new licensure; fully fund add-on endorsements in high-need content areas; and audit and streamline endorsement areas to match the local and regional talent pipelines.

## Improving and Expanding School Safety Measures

Due to staffing limitations among local law enforcement agencies, HCBBoE requests that the General Assembly expand the state grant funding provided for school safety to allow LEAs to hire School Security Officers in addition to SROs to ensure all schools are able to have dedicated, full-time security personnel.

HCBBoE urges the GA not to introduce or pass legislation that would allow any personnel beyond SSOs and SROs to carry firearms on school property.

Support policies that prioritize preventative mental health supports for students such as funding for School Counselors, licensed School Social Workers, and clinical mental and behavioral health professionals.

## Accepting Federal Education Funding

HCBBoE urges that the General Assembly continue to accept federal education funding, which predominantly supports students who are living in poverty, have learning or physical disabilities, or are learning English as a second language.

## Tennessee State Policy on School Vouchers

HCBBoE urges the GA to place stronger household income parameters on access to state-funded private school and homeschool vouchers to limit the ability of affluent families to use taxpayer education dollars towards such programs.

Apply public education state accountability requirements (including TCAP & TN Ready standards, school letter grades, and TVAAS composite scores) to private institutions and homeschool programs accepting vouchers and make the results publicly available to help families make informed decisions about the best education for their children.

## Supporting Strategies Proven to Impact Student Success

Increase sustainable funding for K-12 school-based personnel, particularly to bolster strategies previously funded through state grants, such as RTI2, high-dosage low-ratio tutoring, and Career & Technical Education.

Support state-level funding for strategies that strengthen public education outcomes, particularly: early childhood learning, full service community schools, school-based health clinics, expanded broadband access, and universal free school meals.

Advocate for federal level legislators to increase the funding per pupil spent on students served by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and to amend IDEA to better support schools and parents in their ability to collaborate to meet the educational needs of individual children.



# Letter from the Hamilton County Board of Education

## Advocating for Hamilton County's Educational Needs

Dear Tennessee State Representatives and Senators,

The Hamilton County Board of Education believes these recommendations for the 2024 legislative session of the 113th Tennessee General Assembly merit your careful consideration for reasons including, but not limited to, the subjects listed below:

**Local Expertise and Direct Interaction with Students and Families:** The members of the Hamilton County Board of Education possess an intimate understanding of our community's unique needs being at the forefront of educational decision making for our school system. We are deeply engaged with local schools, parents, and students, allowing us to identify challenges and opportunities that may not be apparent at a broader level.

**Commitment to Student Success:** Our recommendations stem from a steadfast commitment to the success and well-being of each and every student in Hamilton County. We recognize the diverse needs of our students and advocate for policies that promote academic achievement across every corner of Hamilton County.

**Collaboration with Educational Stakeholders:** The Hamilton County Board of Education collaborates with the entire lexicon of stakeholders in education, including teachers, administrators, community support groups, local governance, and community leaders. Our recommendations are a result of extensive consultation and collaboration, ensuring that they reflect a comprehensive and well-informed perspective.

**Track Record of Effective Advocacy:** Over the years, our board has successfully advocated for policies that have positively impacted the local educational landscape. Our track record demonstrates a commitment to effective and pragmatic solutions that address the specific needs of Hamilton County students and the community they grow to be a supportive member within.

**Alignment with State and National Education Goals:** While our focus is on Hamilton County, our recommendations align with broader state and national education goals. We believe that the proposed changes will contribute not only to the success of our local students but also to the overall improvement of the Tennessee education system and to producing future Tennesseans ready to give back to their communities through our investment in their education today

We as a board and as community leaders urge you to consider our recommendations seriously, recognizing the depth of our local knowledge, commitment to student success, and proven advocacy on behalf of Hamilton County. Your support in implementing these proposals will undoubtedly contribute to the betterment of education for the students we serve and the state we love.

Thank you for your time and consideration. With respect in our mutual goals for students,

**The Hamilton County Board of Education**, *Composed by Legislative Representative Ben Connor*

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Mr. Joe Smith, District 3  
*Chair*

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Ms. Rhonda Thurman, District 1

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Dr. Joe Wingate, District 7

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Mr. Gary Kuehn, District 9  
*Vice-Chair*

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Mr. Marco Perez, District 2

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Mr. Larry Grohn, District 8

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Ms. Tiffanie Robinson, District 4

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Ms. Faye Robinson, District 10

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Mr. Ben Connor, District 6  
*Legislative Representative*

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Ms. Karitsa Mosely-Jones, District 5

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Ms. Jill Black, District 11