



SB 2160 (Johnson) HB 2229 (Lamberth)

### **Governor Lee's Early Literacy Initiative**

TQEE supports Governor Lee's proposed investment in early literacy. The proposal calls for evidence-based content and instruction steeped in the science of literacy and a phonics foundation. The initiative would provide training for early grades teachers, funding for high quality curriculum, and streamlined measurement so young children aren't over-tested. For future teachers, our colleges and universities would be required to provide instruction aligned with the science of literacy for students to be licensed to teach in Tennessee.

**\*97% of TN Voters Agree:** "Continue to invest in early literacy programs to ensure all Tennessee children can read by third grade -- a critical year when future academic success depends on children's ability to read."



### **Oppose any re-appropriation of PreK (VPK) Funding**

TQEE strongly opposes any legislation that would erode Voluntary PreK (VPK) funding, including siphoning VPK funding to pay for other important initiatives. Vanderbilt researchers have confirmed that Tennessee children who participated in VPK are better prepared for Kindergarten. Moreover, the children maintain academic advantage over their non-VPK peers through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade as long as their K-3 teachers and schools are effective. Eroding programs that work is a mistake. Instead, we strongly support the Governor's early literacy initiative and continued progress toward high quality, effective PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> grade teaching.

**\*88% of TN Voters Agree:** "Increase state funding for Tennessee's voluntary Pre-K program to ensure every 4 year old has the option to attend if their parents want them to."



SB 1947 (Hensley) HB 1966 (Haston)

### **Rural PreK (VPK) Expansion for Distressed and At-Risk Counties**

This measure expands voluntary PreK in rural distressed/at-risk districts that demonstrate both quality and need and allows these districts some flexibility in defining child eligibility. With high quality PreK being a repeatedly proven strategy, it's concerning that it is only available to roughly 40% (~18,000) of the state's disadvantaged 4 year olds. Children without access live in all corners of our state. Among those adversely affected are families living in rural distressed and at-risk communities which face some daunting challenges including being especially impacted by the opioid crisis. It's no wonder Governor Lee has issued a special call for additional investment in those communities. Educators, leaders and parents in these communities overwhelmingly desire additional PreK resources, and have joined a "Rural PreK Coalition", signing a letter to Chairs Gresham and White making the specific request. TQEE believes an affirmative response to their request is crucial.

**\*91% of TN Voters Agree:** "Increase the number of 4 year olds who can attend PreK by expanding programs in the rural counties that are the most economically distressed."



*SB 2253 (Haile) HB 2168 (Hazlewood)*

## **Child Care Strategic Plan Taskforce**

Tennessee has forfeited to other states more than \$200 million in federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) money over recent years, despite the near crisis situation of child care across the state. 50% of Tennessee families live in a “child care desert” – a census tract with 3x as many children under 5 as there are licensed child care slots. \*\*98% of Tennessee parents of children under age 5 say their workforce participation and career advancement has been adversely impacted by insufficient child care; and as a result they lose \$850 million annually in take home pay. And our businesses are negatively impacted too – losing \$270 million annually. It is prudent to take a strategic approach to solving the problems of a complex and inadequate system to create more high-quality, affordable child care slots. **TQEE supports a taskforce of key state commissioners, legislators, business leaders and child care providers to develop a strategic child care plan to benefit working parents, employers and taxpayers.**

**\*90% of TN Voters Agree:** “Child care quality has a major impact on children’s kindergarten readiness.”

**\*\*98% of TN Parents of Children Under Age 5 say:** Inadequate child care services has hurt their work productivity or limited career opportunities.



*SB 2797 (Akbari) HB 2509 (Hawk)*

## **Fair Share TANF Allocations**

The revelation of \$732 million unspent TANF surplus, and \$190 million in annual ongoing TANF funds, offers a unique opportunity to reduce Tennessee’s large (28%) child poverty rate and promote family self-sufficiency. This measure would establish a reasonable reserve, while ensuring federal TANF funds aren’t unnecessarily stockpiled as they have been. It also ensures each community receives annual TANF funding based on their share of population in poverty and carves out some funds from the surplus especially for early home visiting and before/after/summer care programs for children. **TQEE supports this measure to maintain a reasonable TANF reserve and use the surplus and ongoing annual funding to promote economic self sufficiency and reduce child poverty.**

**\*71% of TN Voters Agree:** “Tennessee should use ALL of the federal funding it receives because there are not enough quality, affordable child care options for families. Instead of sending our tax dollars to other states, the state could expand child care options for Tennesseans.”



*SB 900 (Southerland) HB 653 (Hawk)*

## **School Nurses**

The current ratio of nurses to students is 1:3000 in Tennessee. The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend that school districts provide full-time school nurses in every school building. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, schools should have one nurse for every 750 students. The state cost for that is estimated at \$39 million annually; but the return on investment is clear. **TQEE recommends lowering the ratio of elementary school nurses to 1:750 based on national best practice standards and Tennessee’s BEP review committee recommendations.**

**\*83% of TN Voters Agree:** “Invest in lowering the ratio of school nurses from 1 for every 3,000 students to 1 for every 750 students to reduce chronic absenteeism and improve the health of kids with illnesses like asthma and diabetes.”

**To learn more about  
TQEE contact:**

Mike Carpenter  
Executive Director  
mike.carpenter@tqee.org  
901-331-0153

TQEE is a statewide, bipartisan coalition committed to quality early childhood education as an essential foundation and urgent priority for a thriving Tennessee. Our 20,000+ members include moms and dads, mayors, business leaders, educators, law enforcement, people of faith and civic organizations in communities across Tennessee. We’re led by a statewide board of directors and supported by an eighty-five-member policy council.