

Introduction to Johnson City Government

Source: City of Johnson City, Communications & Marketing

CITY COMMISSION

Five commissioners are elected for four-year, overlapping terms, with at least two commissioners elected every two years. In November 2014, voters approved moving the municipal election date to coincide with the state general election date beginning November 2016. The state general election is held in even years on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. New commissioners are sworn in on the first Monday in December.

To be eligible for the office of commissioner, a person must be a qualified voter of the city, a freeholder in the city (property owner), and cannot have been convicted of malfeasance in office, bribery or other corrupt practice. All city elections are held under the supervision of the Washington County Election Commission, in accordance with the laws governing all state and county elections.

Following each election, the commission elects one of its members to serve as mayor for a two-year term and chooses a member to serve as vice mayor in the temporary absence of the mayor. The mayor serves as the ceremonial head of the City, presides at all City Commission meetings, and represents the City at a variety of community and public functions. City commissioners participate on a variety of boards, commissions and committees. Their involvement provides an important link between citizens, businesses, non-profits and municipal government.

The City Commission ensures the provision of community services the people of Johnson City need and want. In carrying out its duties, the City Commission must address citizens' concerns while planning for the community's long-term growth and development. To this end, it is the responsibility of the City Commission to oversee costs and be as efficient as possible while managing the city's infrastructure, projects and investments.

In 1939, the Johnson City Board of commissioners adopted the City charter establishing the council-manager form of government under which we operate today. In the City of Johnson City the elected officials are referred to as the Board of Commissioners, rather than a council. This form of government combines the advantages of democratic government in an elected body of five commission members with the efficiency and productivity of a professional administrator in the city manager. The commission exercises legislative powers by passing ordinances and resolutions. All executive functions are directed by the city manager, who has the responsibility to carry out all policies and programs enacted by the commission. The city manager is appointed by, and is directly responsible to, the commission.

CITY CHARTER

The city charter is a document that defines the organization, powers, functions and essential procedures of the city government.

The charter provides that regular meetings of the Board of Commissioners will be held on the first and third Thursday of each month at 6 p.m. in the Commission Chambers of the Municipal and Safety Building. Special sessions may be called when the city manager, the mayor, or any two commissioners

feel that the public welfare demands such a meeting. Twelve hours' notice must be given for all special sessions, and all such sessions must be open to the public. Each call for a special meeting must set forth the character of business to be discussed at such meeting. No other business may be considered at that time.

PASSING ORDINANCES

The charter provides a guide as to how the governing body will create and enforce city laws. In Tennessee, regardless of the type of city government, these laws, or ordinances, must be initiated and passed into law following a strict procedure. For instance, the passage of an ordinance in Johnson City requires the ordinance be placed on the agenda three times. Ordinances regarding taxation, zoning and budgeting of city money require that one reading, usually the second or third, be set aside as a public hearing, offering citizens an opportunity to express their opinions and offer information relevant to the proposed ordinance. All ordinances are recorded in, and become a part of the city code, which is a complete set of all ordinances enforced by the city. Once passed, an ordinance can be amended or repealed only by passage of another ordinance, or by a charter amendment which may affect ordinances already in force. Charter amendments require a majority vote of the citizens of the city.

The Johnson City Code of Ordinances can be found here:

https://www.johnsoncitytn.org/government/codes_and_charter.php

PASSING RESOLUTIONS

In addition to ordinances, the Commission also considers resolutions. Resolutions are used to approve city services to the community. For example, it is necessary for the commission to approve use of funds budgeted for a particular project, such as installation of water lines. This does not necessitate an ordinance, for the budget ordinance has already provided the money. However, action of the specific project is necessary to ensure that the monies to be spent are being properly allocated. The commission uses resolutions to implement action allowed or called for by existing ordinances and charter provisions.

MEETING SCHEDULE

City Commission meetings are currently being held electronically pursuant to Executive Order 71 issued by Gov. Bill on Dec. 22, 2020. When meetings are held in person those meetings are livestreamed and available to the public on the City's YouTube channel, www.johnsoncitytn.org/meetings.

Meeting agendas for upcoming meetings as well as meeting minutes and videos from past meetings are available on the City's website, www.johnsoncitytn.org/citycommissionagendas.

VOLUNTEER BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

The City of Johnson City has a variety of committees that are working constantly to serve the community better. The Boards and Committees involve residents of the City of Johnson City and regional area who volunteer their time and expertise for the benefit of the community. Appointments for the Johnson City Volunteer Boards and Committees take place semi-annually in January and July, with applications being accepted prior to the appointment month. Information about the various boards can be found on the website, www.johnsoncitytn.org/boards.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The City Commission adopted the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan last year. The five-year plan outlines goals in four areas: Economic vitality, quality of place, future ready infrastructure and excellence in city government. The plan was developed using information from the City's citizen surveys and input gathered in a branding study that was conducted as part of our brand relaunch several years ago. The plan is available on the City website, www.johnsoncitytn.org/strategicplan.

CURRENT ISSUES (relevant to 10-12 year olds)

1. City departments are currently preparing their budget requests for Fiscal Year 2022 (July 2021 – June 2022). Budget discussions will be ongoing for months and the final proposed budget will eventually come in front of the City Commission in April and May for approval.
2. The City of Johnson City announced in November 2020 its pursuit of recognition as a UNICEF Child Friendly City (CFCI). Part of this initiative is conducting a situational analysis of child well-being in the City of Johnson City. Based on the findings, the City will implement an action plan that prioritizes the best interests of children and youth within local policies. The CFCI Framework for Action has five goal areas: safety and inclusion, children's participation, equitable social services, safe living environments and play and leisure. Members of the CFCI steering committee provide updates to the City Commission periodically and these presentations will be listed on the agenda.
3. The Sesquicentennial Legacy Project (Natural Adventure Area and Legacy Plaza) are nearing completion and we will be holding a ribbon cutting this spring. These were projects that were started in 2019 when the City celebrated its 150th anniversary. Both spaces are located downtown in or near King Commons. The Natural Adventure Area features an outdoor classroom and music play structures, as well as more traditional playground activities. The Legacy Plaza includes a history circle featuring important dates and information about Johnson City's history. A "Tri-Star" area pays tribute to the Tennessee flag, which was designed by Johnson City resident Col. LeRoy Reeves.

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW YOUTH CAN PARTICIPATE IN CIVIC MATTERS

We have the JC 101 program for adults and have recently engaged with Science Hill High School to conduct Gov. All. Out. program for juniors and seniors but don't currently have anything developed for younger youth. We are always open to suggestions on ways we can assist the City's youth with becoming more engaged in government operations. If you or the youth you work with have suggestions we would love to hear them.

Our suggestions for increasing youth participation in civic matters are:

- Be aware of events. This can be done by watching a City Commission meeting or reading meeting minutes. Local news organizations may also be a good resource.
- Discuss current events with family members, friends and members of local organizations (volunteer and government).
- Find ways to volunteer to support an issue you care about.
- Learn how to contact and engage with local elected leaders.

Johnson City strives to become a 'Child Friendly City'

Bettering the lives of children improves the livability of the entire community.

That's one of the philosophies behind an effort Johnson City has begun to join a handful of communities in this country to be recognized by the United Nations Children's Fund as a Child-Friendly City.

The UNICEF initiative was launched in 1996, and uses a child rights-based framework for cities to reach their goals to establish safer, more equitable, inclusive and child-responsive communities around the world.

The designation has been adopted in more than 3,000 municipalities in 40 countries. Johnson City hopes to complete the two-year process and join Houston, San Francisco and Minneapolis on the short list of municipalities in the United States to achieve the status of a Child-Friendly City.

Johnson City Mayor Jenny Brock made the announcement in a message posted Friday on the city's Facebook page. The pre-taped address, which was filmed in front the city's new children's mural at the corner of Buffalo and Market streets, was made in conjunction with observance of World Children's Day.

"We aren't at this location this morning by accident," Brock said in her address. "The mural behind us visually says it all. Diversity,

inclusion, play, imagination, learning, environment and teamwork — and so much more, depending who is standing here viewing it.”

Brock said the goal of the Child-Friendly City initiative is to make Johnson City a “safe and healthy community for children to grow and thrive.”

That includes giving children in the city a platform for voicing their concerns and suggestions for improving the community.

Their ideas will be a part of a public/private advisory committee’s suggestions for removing barriers that impede a child’s development.

“We will make a commitment to keep children at the forefront of all our decisions,” Brock said. “We will use it as a planning and governing tool.”

Jeremy Cole, managing director of the Southeast Region at UNICEF USA, said the organization asks municipalities vying to be a Child-Friendly City to “think of children when making every policy decision.” That includes listening to children when determining the health, safety and infrastructure needs of the community.

Cole said cities are asked to identify specific areas that need to be addressed in reaching their goals under the initiative.

“This is not a quick fix,” Cole said. “These are deep-seated issues that will take time to address.”

Residents are asked to send messages to Brock letting her know how Johnson City can help families thrive by going to act.unicefusa.org/CFCIJC or by texting: CFCI JC to 52886.

More information about Child-Friendly Cities can be found at www.unicefusa.org/mission/usa/childfriendlycities.

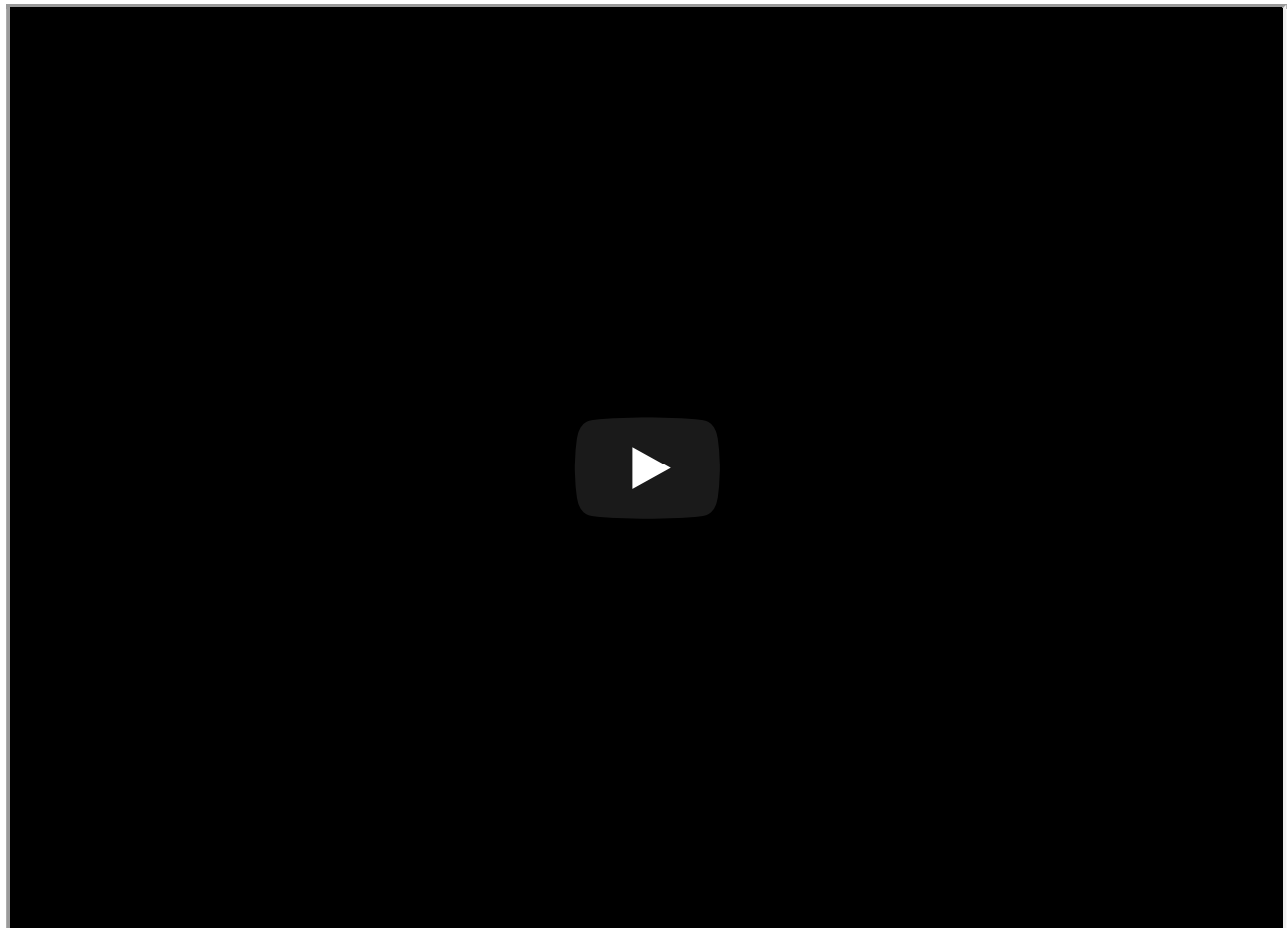
Welcome to Johnson City, TN



Let Commissioner Brock know how
Johnson City can help families thrive.

[CLICK HERE](#)

or text "CFCI JC" to 52886



The City of Johnson City announced on Nov. 20, 2020, [World Children's Day](#), it will begin its journey toward recognition as a UNICEF Child Friendly City. Through the [Child Friendly Cities Initiative \(CFCI\)](#), Johnson City, in addition to the [first cohort of pilot cities and first county](#), will implement an ambitious, two-year process toward recognition as a UNICEF Child Friendly City.

Originally created in 1996, UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities Initiative uses a child rights-based framework to build a roadmap for establishing safer, more just, equitable, inclusive and child-responsive cities and communities around the world. Since its inception, CFCI has been adopted in over 3,000 municipalities in 40 countries. UNICEF USA applauds Johnson City for its commitment to using this framework to build a better community for children.





In its pursuit of recognition as a Child Friendly City, government officials and community leaders in Johnson City along with pilot cohort cities and county Houston, Minneapolis, San Francisco and Prince George’s County will conduct a situational analysis of child well-being in each city. Based on these findings, the cities will implement an action plan that prioritizes the best interests of children and youth within their local policies. CFCI will empower leaders to address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and systemic racism on children, work to combat discrimination and elevate their voices in local governance and decision-making.

“Our children are our most precious resource for they are our future, and partnering with UNICEF USA to create a safer, more inclusive and more promising future for them is something we can all take great pride and comfort in,” said Johnson City Commissioner Jenny Brock, who served as Mayor at the time of the announcement.

“Together with our partners – ETSU, Ballad Health, Frontier Health, Johnson City Schools and Johnson City Public Library – we will have a tangible, measurable work plan to ensure an optimum environment

for Johnson City's youth."

Through the CFCI Framework for Action, Johnson City will identify objectives under five goal areas focusing on supporting children and young people, including: safety and inclusion, children's participation, equitable social services, safe living environments and play and leisure.

Residents are encouraged to send messages directly to Commissioner Brock letting her know how Johnson City can help families thrive via this website: <https://act.unicefusa.org/CFCIJC> or text: **CFCI JC to 52886**.

For more information about Child Friendly Cities Initiative in the United States, visit www.unicefusa.org/mission/usa/childfriendlycities.

[To take action and encourage cities across the United States to become more child friendly, visit act.unicefusa.org/cfci.](https://act.unicefusa.org/cfci)

Child Friendly Cities Initiative

When we make our communities better places for children, we make them better places for all.

About UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities Initiative

UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) was launched globally in 1996 to protect children's rights in an increasingly urbanized and decentralized world. The initiative brings UNICEF together with local stakeholders to establish **safer, more just, equitable, inclusive and child-responsive cities and communities around the world**. Since its inception, CFCI has been adopted in over 3,000 municipalities in more than 40 countries.

CFCI uses the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) as a framework to help local governments prioritize the needs of children and young people and elevate the voices of youth in local governance and decision-making.

Through this flexible, dynamic, child rights-focused framework, communities are improved as neighborhoods become safer, schools and health systems function better and infrastructure is strengthened for all citizens. Thus, a "Child Friendly City" is a city that is fit for all.

On August 12, 2020, [International Youth Day](#), an annual observance to celebrate young peoples' voices, actions and meaningful, equitable engagement, UNICEF USA [launched](#) the Child Friendly Cities Initiative in the United States. **Decatur, GA, Houston, TX; Johnson City, TN;**

Minneapolis, MN; Prince George's County, MD; and San Francisco, CA have partnered with UNICEF USA in this effort as the first cohort of cities and the first county to implement an ambitious, two-year process toward recognition as a UNICEF Child Friendly City or County.

In pursuit of recognition as a Child Friendly City, government officials and community leaders, including children and youth in Decatur, Houston, Johnson City, Minneapolis, Prince George's County and San Francisco will conduct a situation analysis of child well-being in each city/county. Based on these findings, they will implement an action plan that prioritizes the best interests of children and youth within their local policies. CFCI will empower leaders to address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and system racism on children, and to work to combat discrimination and elevate their voices in local governance and decision making.

Is your city child-friendly?

If you want to find out, just ask the kids who live there. Do they feel safe? Can they go to a doctor when they are sick? Do they like their school? Are there plenty of parks and playgrounds where they can go and meet up with friends? Do people listen to them when they talk — their teachers, parents, coaches? Do they feel — most of the time — like they get their fair share?

UNICEF USA wants to help you ensure that every child who lives in your community can answer a resounding ‘Yes!’ to all the above. To learn more and connect with our national CFCI Learning Community, join our [Facebook Group](#) or [send us an email](#).

TN General Assembly passes bill requiring schools to offer summer school programs for students falling behind

2 months ago

Jordan Brown

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (WATE) — The “Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act” has been passed in the Tennessee General Assembly. The [bill](#) requires schools to implement a program of after-school learning mini-camps, learning loss bridge camps, and summer learning camps to remediate student learning loss.

There are 3 parts to this bill. Part one looks at summer programming. Starting summer of 2021, school districts will be required to provide a six-week summer school program for elementary school students, and a four week summer school program for middle school students; as well as an after school camp focused on STEAM learning.

Teachers who participate in the summer camps will receive a stipend of \$1,000 per week.

The second part of the bill requires the department to provide a system for implementing a statewide tutoring core.

The third part of the bill has to do with a third grade gate. It is meant

to provide support for students who have not yet met the “on track” or “mastered” components of the third grade English Language Arts portion of the TCAP exam.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports only 34 percent of Tennessee students are proficient or advanced readers by the time they hit fourth grade. Research shows that students who do not achieve reading proficiency by third grade are more likely to drop out of high school, be incarcerated or experience poverty when they become adults.

This research is the reason why this legislation puts an emphasis on students in the third grade.

Third graders whose test scores fall in the “approaching” level only have a few options:

They will be held back and forced to repeat the grade unless they successfully retake the exam, attend a 4-week summer school program, or participate in tutoring for the duration of their fourth grade school year.

Those whose test scores falls at what’s considered below average, will have to repeat the grade if they do not successfully pass a retake or attend a 4-week summer program in addition to tutoring for the duration of the following school year.

Mike Winstead, director of schools for Maryville City Schools says this feels like too much weight is being placed on one exam.

“This legislation says on one test at the end of 3rd grade, regardless of what the kid has done throughout the year, if that kid is below or

approaching, then retention is the plan,” Winstead said. “This is 60,000 kids statewide. 60,000 out of 100,000 kids scored below or approaching so we’re not talking about a small number.”

Parents like Nira Seiber are sharing their concerns as well. Seiber has two children who could be impacted.

“Even if they score a couple points below the proficient level, they will be held back or we will have to jump through several hoops for them to go on to the next grade and it seems like more pressure on the parent when we’re already dealing with so many pressures this past year,” Seiber said.

There was an amendment added that allows parents to go through an appeals process for students achieving a performance level rating of “approaching” on the ELA portion of the student’s most recent TCAP test.

To read more about SB 7002, click [here](#).

Intervening to Stop Learning Loss – SB 7002

- Requires interventions for struggling students including after-school learning mini-camps, learning loss bridge camps and summer learning camps, beginning summer 2021.
- Program prioritizes students who score below proficient in both reading (ELA) and math subjects.
- Creates the Tennessee Accelerated Literacy and Learning Corps to provide ongoing tutoring for students throughout the entire school year.
- Strengthens laws around a third grade reading gate so we no longer advance students who are not prepared.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee backs legislation focusing on learning loss, reading ahead of special session

Students across Tennessee are returning to school this week as many districts reopen. Not all students will return to the classroom though, some like Metro Nashville Public Schools students will learn virtually instead.

Meghan Mangrum, Nashville Tennessean

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee announced Thursday a series of bills his administration is backing in next week's [special session on education](#) — including legislation focusing on student learning loss thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic and the state's stagnant literacy rates.

The governor called the special session, scheduled to begin Tuesday, last month in order to [prioritize passing bills aimed at helping schools navigate the coronavirus pandemic and prepare for the next academic year](#).

RELATED: [Gov. Bill Lee calls Jan. 19 special legislative session to focus on education, learning loss](#)

In addition to learning loss interventions and holding educators harmless from the results of standardized tests, Lee will propose [adding funding for teacher salaries](#), according to a statement from his

office.



Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee called a special legislative session to focus on education. The session begins Jan. 19.

George Walker IV / The Tennessean

“COVID-19 has disrupted every aspect of education and we are on the cusp of severe consequences for our students if we don’t act now,” Lee said in a statement. “Data suggests that Tennessee third graders are facing an estimated 50% drop in reading proficiency and a projected 65% drop in math proficiency and that is not an acceptable path for our kids..”

Only 34% of Tennessee students are proficient or advanced readers by fourth grade, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress and widespread research shows students who do not achieve [reading proficiency by third grade](#) are more likely to drop out of high school, be incarcerated or experience poverty as adults.

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MORE: [*Tennessee Education Department to use \\$100 million to target state's lagging literacy rates*](#)

Last year, the Tennessee Department of Education and Lee [championed a \\$68 million literacy initiative that eventually failed](#) due to lawmakers' concerns over the fast rollout of the plan and as the General Assembly made budget cuts because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We know that literacy is something we have to tackle in this state and something we have to tackle with earnest," Education Commissioner Penny Schwinn told The Tennessean Thursday. "This really does create a bold vision for what we want to do with literacy and then allows districts to create those local plans to meet those higher expectations to ensure all our students are moving toward reading proficiency in third grade."



Tennessee Education Commissioner Penny Schwinn interacts with Anna Foley, 7, during a visit to Forest Hill Elementary School on Wednesday, Sept 2, 2020.

Joe Rondone/The Commercial Appeal

Some current lawmakers and educators have questioned Lee and Schwinn's [previous predictions surrounding the magnitude of the learning loss](#), but most agree that time spent outside of the classroom is detrimental for students.

The governor's office announced three bills addressing some of these issues Thursday and said companion bills will be filed in the coming days.

SB 7002: Intervening to Stop Learning Loss

This bill would create and require interventions like after-school learning or summer learning programs [for students struggling due to extended time out of school](#), beginning this summer as well as create the new Tennessee Accelerated Literacy and Learning Corps to provide ongoing tutoring for students throughout the entire school year.

The proposed bill would also aim to strengthen laws that don't allow students to be "socially promoted" or go on to the next grade after third grade if they are not reading on grade level.

RELATED: [Former Gov. Bill Haslam, Crissy Haslam launch summer tutoring program to address COVID-19](#)

SB 7003: Building Better Readers with Phonics

This legislation — introduced just weeks after the Tennessee Department of Education launched a [\\$100 million literacy initiative, Reading 360](#) — would ensure local school districts use a phonics-based approach for teaching children to read. It would also require and provide training and support for educators to teach phonics-based reading instruction.

SB 7001: Accountability to Inform

This legislation would extend [previous provisions made during the 2019-20 school year](#) that would prevent students, teachers, schools and districts from facing any negative consequences associated with student assessments.

Though testing was ultimately canceled for the 2019-20 school year, [lawmakers raced to ensure educators and students wouldn't be penalized](#) after widespread school disruptions last spring.

Some Republican lawmakers from both the House and the Senate are already praising the governor and his education commissioner.

MORE: [Tennessee's 112th General Assembly begins amid FBI investigation and as COVID-19 crisis hits home](#)

RELATED: [Tennessee to receive \\$1.1 billion in federal COVID-19 relief aimed at K-12 education](#)

Sen. Ferrell Haile, R-Gallatin, called the department's literacy efforts a potential "gamechanger."

"I am extremely disturbed that we only have 37% of our third graders reading where they need to. ...that is just unacceptable," Haile said. "I think the department is laying out a plan here by going back to phonics [that] I think this can be a gamechanger that can take care of students and move our students up."

Rep. Debra Moody, R-Covington, also praised the phonics-based approach.

"I feel very strongly about the importance of phonics and if we don't get this right for our children in Tennessee, it's an impediment for them for the rest of their life," Moody said.

Last year's failed bill called for the state to adopt a teaching method known as the "Science of Reading," which focuses on skills such as phonics, fluency and vocabulary but some lawmakers questioned the

approach.

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Meghan Mangrum covers education for the USA TODAY Network — Tennessee. Contact her at mmangrum@tennessean.com. Follow her on Twitter @memangrum.

Fiscal Summary

Increase State Expenditures – \$67,331,900/Each Year FY20-21 and FY21-22/General Fund \$48,094,200/Each Year FY20-21 and FY21-22/LEAP \$25,506,400/FY22-23 and Subsequent Years/General Fund \$38,259,700/FY22-23 and Subsequent Years/LEAP Other Fiscal Impact – The state receives approximately \$191,000,000 in TANF block grant funding each year and the state’s TANF balance as of September 30, 2020 was \$735,800,000. The Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act will draw upon existing federal TANF dollars in the amount of \$50,893,900 in each year FY20-21 and FY21-22 and \$28,115,900 in FY22-23 and subsequent years. In addition, the state will utilize up to \$3,000,000 in ESSER 2.0 federal funds to implement the Innovative Benchmark Assessment Pilot Program. Beginning in FY22-23, permissive increases in local expenditures may occur. However, due to multiple unknown factors, a precise estimate cannot be reasonably determined. According to the Department of Finance and Administration, Division of Budget, the Governor’s proposed budget for FY21-22 recognizes an increase in state expenditures from the General Fund in the amount of \$67,331,100 in each year FY20-21 and FY21-22. This bill:

(1) Requires the department of education to create and administer the Tennessee learning loss remediation and student acceleration program (the program);

(2) Authorizes participation in after-school learning mini-camps, learning loss bridge camps, and summer learning camps;

(3) Requires the department to establish, fund, and implement an innovative benchmark assessment pilot program;

(4) Establishes the Tennessee accelerating literacy and learning corps (TALLC); and

(5) Revises present law provisions governing the promotion of students.

TENNESSEE LEARNING LOSS REMEDIATION AND STUDENT ACCELERATION PROGRAM

This bill requires the department to establish the program to aid LEAs and public charter schools in remediating learning loss by facilitating the provision of in-person educational services to students outside the regular school day. The department will:

(1) Determine program requirements and procedures for allocating funding to each LEA and participating public charter school for conducting mini-camps and summer camps. LEAs and participating public charter schools are only required to conduct summer camps in the summers, following the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years;

(2) Determine program requirements and a procedure for allocating funding to each LEA and participating public charter school for conducting bridge camps, which LEAs and public charter schools must conduct annually beginning in the summer of 2021;

(3) Provide training, technical assistance, and guidance to LEAs and participating public charter schools conducting the camps;