

Nashville, TN — The Education Trust in Tennessee issues the following statement in response to Governor Lee’s State of the State Address and Budget Proposal for 2023-2024:

Every February, Tennessee’s governor delivers a State of the State Address to share their legislative agenda and budget proposal for the new fiscal year. Our state budget is about more than tax revenue and allocating funding: it’s about our values and meeting the moment before us. We know that this moment is historic in light of a new K-12 funding formula, continued challenges related to recovery from the effects of COVID-19, and sharp drops in college-going rates for our graduates. Meeting this moment requires us to make strategic investments in education systems for the [nearly 1 million students](#) who attend K-12 public schools in Tennessee, and the over 180,000 students who enroll in our public higher education institutions. Governor Lee’s [\\$55.6 billion](#) budget proposal signals his commitment to them and to Tennessee’s future in several important ways.

K-12 Education

Governor Lee’ budget expands important commitments made to K-12 education through the [Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement \(TISA\)](#) with an additional \$350 million in funding to districts. The Governor also included a \$125 million for teacher pay raises, which is part of his stated goal to raise the minimum teacher salary to \$50,000 by 2027. These increases move us toward our goal to reach the national average of approximately \$15,000 per pupil. Governor Lee, recognizing the need to expand learning opportunities for students, has added an additional \$60.8 million to extend summer learning camps, while also expanding the eligibility age to now include students from kindergarten through 9th grade. In an effort to reduce barriers to participation, he has included \$10 million for summer bus transportation.

Higher Education

The Governor’s proposals for higher education signal that expanded access to postsecondary attainment and workforce preparation are a vital part of Tennessee’s growth and central to economic mobility for families. Governor Lee seeks to strengthen and expand postsecondary pathways through [the Tennessee Colleges of Applied](#)

[Technology \(TCATs\)](#), governed by the [Tennessee Board of Regents](#). The Governor is proposing a \$1 billion dollar investment in TCATs, the largest in state history, which will provide training for workers to obtain technical and professional skills and certifications. The \$1 billion investment will also fund renovations to outdated facilities in seven TCAT campuses state-wide, investments in new buildings, expansions and improvements to sixteen current TCAT campuses, and the creation of six new TCATs across the state.

We underscore the Governor's commitment to address the unacceptable conditions for our state's most vulnerable children, particularly those under the care of the Department of Children's Services through foster care, which is now [at a breaking point](#). We can and must do better for these children, as well as the staff in these agencies, to ensure their safety and protection. This must remain an urgent priority for our state's leaders.

We know that there is important work left to do and we are committed to working with our state leaders to ensure every student has access to opportunity and high levels of achievement in every public school and institution in the state. Our [80 partners](#) in the TN Alliance for Equity in Education have laid out an ambitious [policy agenda for 2023](#) and will be engaged at the General Assembly throughout the legislative session. Tennessee must continue to prioritize investments in K-12 and higher education, and to focus on strategies that promote access to opportunity while providing dedicated support for schools so that students can reach their full potential. Governor Lee's budget is an important step in that direction.

For more information, see:

1. [Fiscal Year 2023-24 Budget Overview](#)
2. [2023 State of the State Address](#)
3. [Register Now: Understanding Tennessee's Education Budget with the Sycamore Institute](#)