

**Feeding Our Future Comprehensive Advocacy Portfolio**

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	4
Topic of Focus.....	5
Policy Description.....	5
Policy Context.....	5
Importance.....	6
Theoretical Framework.....	6
Researching the Issue and Literature Review.....	7
Nature of the Current Policy.....	7
Contextual Factors.....	8
Policy Impact.....	9
Future Direction.....	10
Presentation of the Brand and Support Mapping.....	11
The Brand.....	11
Opinions Across the State.....	11
Persuasive Arguments for Support.....	11
Legislative Allies and Detractors.....	12
Opposition.....	12
Plans to Form a Coalition.....	12
Media Campaign.....	14
Campaign Goals.....	14
Media Avenues.....	14
Media Content.....	15
Implementation Steps.....	16

Advocacy Plan.....	17
Focus and Target Population.....	17
Advocacy Strategies.....	18
Inclusion of Target Population.....	19
Potential Ramifications.....	19
Potential Opposition.....	20
Elected Officials to Approach.....	21
Strategy.....	21
Key Points to Discuss.....	22
Progress Monitoring Plan.....	22
Conclusion.....	22
References.....	24
Appendix A.....	28
Appendix B.....	30
Appendix C.....	32
Appendix D.....	33
Appendix E.....	34
Appendix F.....	35
Appendix G.....	36
Appendix H.....	38
Appendix I.....	40

## **Abstract**

The Feeding our Future campaign is advocating for the reintroduction and passage of the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act (SB0674/HB0815). This bill offers incentives for providing nutritious meals to all students in Tennessee, regardless of their families financial constraints. In 2021, there were 5 million children that lived in food insecure households. Food insecurity is defined by having limited or uncertain access to adequate food. The National average for food insecurity is 10.4 percent and Tennessee is at 11.2 percent (Key Statistics and Graphics, 2022) . The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federal program that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to qualifying children at school (Definitions of Food Security, 2022). In 2021, the NSLP provided 2.2 billion meals with 98.9 percent of those being free or reduced cost (Definitions of Food Security, 2022). Yet everyday there are children who are not receiving the adequate nutrition needed to grow, develop, and be successful at school. These students fall through the cracks and into a category that does not qualify for assistance and can also not afford school lunches. Food insecure children are at higher risk to have health issues such as anemia, asthma, as well as obesity (Thomas, et al.2019). These children also experience significant negative development effects and impairments in school. Feeding the Future will enact several advocacy strategies that will reach state officials, schools, beneficiaries, and the general public to expand awareness and increase support for the passage of SB0674/HB0815. Feeding our Future believes that every child deserves access to a nutritious meal while at school regardless of their ability to pay, and every child deserves a chance to thrive, regardless of measures which are out of their control.



## **Topic of Focus**

### **Policy Description**

The social problem we will be addressing is food insecurity in school settings in Tennessee. The policy we are advocating is the reintroduction and passage of the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act (SB0674/HB0815). The goal of this bill is to ensure that every student has access to a meal at school. This bill requires schools to provide a lunch meal to each student who requests one regardless of their ability to pay. The bill prohibits schools from any type of “lunch shaming” towards students who acquire a lunch debt.

This bill impacts those who are unable to pay for their school lunch. This would likely also impact the school system and/or county as they would need to ensure some way to obtain reimbursement for these meals outside of the student and their family. At this time, they are unsure of any potential unintended consequences.

Senator Sarah Kyle and Representative John Ray Clemmons sponsored this bill the last time it was considered by the legislature. The Senate passed the bill, but it failed to pass in the House, dying in committee in February of 2021.

Currently there is no policy in Tennessee related to school lunch shaming. There is a federal program, The National School Lunch Program, that provides a low cost or free lunch to qualifying students. This program provides a nutritionally balanced lunch to public school children each school day. The intended beneficiaries are student’s whose household income is at or below 130% of the federal poverty line.

### **Policy Context**

The bill was taken off the House agenda on 2/1/2021. The Tennessee Anti-Shaming Lunch Act was approved in the Senate on 2/11/2021, but this bill is supported in its entirety. Our group is advocating for the reintroduction and passing of SB674/HB815 the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act. The goal is

to reintroduce this bill and have it passed without any amendment. This would prevent schools from being able to take action against students who cannot pay for their lunch or pay off their school debt.

### **Importance**

The Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act is important as it would ensure every student has access to a meal at school. Students often go hungry at school, not because their school doesn't offer lunch, but because there are states that do not prevent lunch shaming. These schools can refuse hot lunches to students with outstanding meal debt.

Although policies such as the National School Lunch Program provide children with meal assistance, some families do not qualify for such services because their household income is higher than the qualifying amount yet they also can't afford the cost of lunches at school. These students then become at risk for lunch shaming at school. No child should be punished for their parent's inability to afford their school meal.

It has been found that students, starting at the age of 6, who are food insecure are likely to be negatively affected in the area of psychosocial and academia. Students with food insecurity are more likely to repeat a grade or even be suspended. They are also more likely to have difficulty getting along with peers and to have to be seen by a psychologist (Alaimo, K. et al, 2001).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Huttman's Policy Analysis Model is an appropriate theoretical framework to apply to this issue. This framework provides a broad approach to look deeper into the different concerns this bill brings to light. It starts by asking what are the unmet needs and the characteristics of that group. Next it studies in detail the goals and outcomes of the bill and also the implementation strategies. This framework also looks at scientific findings, which could help to strengthen the case by providing actual data. It also allows for a strong look at what the power bases for supports are. An important piece will surely be where Huttman takes an extensive look into both resource scarcity and cost and benefits. It is

likely that fiscal conservatives will have great concern over the financial aspect, therefore, it will be crucial to address that area thoroughly. Overall, this framework will provide the in-depth understanding that is needed to realize the big picture of this need.

### **Researching the Issue and Literature Review**

#### **Nature of the Current Policy**

Lunch shaming can present itself in many forms including denying a child food if they are unable to pay, putting a stamp on a child's hand if they owe money for lunches, giving a child a cold meal instead of a hot one, or even throwing away a meal instead of giving it to the child that owes (Barrington, 2022). Other forms of lunch shaming are not allowing a student to participate in school activities or even graduate if they have lunch debt (Kruesi, K., 2020).

A deeper dive into this issue would require one to look at food insecurity, which is defined by there being a time during the year when a household is uncertain of having or unable to acquire enough food to meet the needs of all their members because they had insufficient money or other resources for food (Definitions of Food Security, 2022). Food insecure households include those with low food security and very low food security (Definitions of Food Security, 2022). In 2021, 5 million children lived in households that were food insecure. It was found that children in single mother households and Black and Hispanic children were among the highest of the food insecure households. The National average for food insecurity is 10.4 percent and Tennessee is at 11.2 percent. (Key Statistics and Graphics, 2022).

It has been found that food insecure children have higher rates of asthma, depressive symptoms, eczema and other skin allergies (Thomas, et al. 2019). These children are also more likely to repeat a grade and have difficulty getting along with their peers (Alaimo, et al. 2001).

The Tennessee Anti Lunch Shaming Act has been drafted and introduced in both the House and the Senate. It passed in the Senate on 2/11/2021, but was taken off the agenda in the House on 2/1/2021. As a result, the bill has died and no progress has been made.

## **Contextual Factors**

Tennessee currently has no policy in place regarding lunch shaming. The school lunch policy is defined by Tennessee Code Annotated 49-6-2023, which requires compliance with the National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. These laws fund free and low-cost lunches for some students and also establish nutritional guidelines for meals supplied through the program; however, they do not cover all students, and do not set any limits on the behavior of school districts toward students who do not qualify for free lunches and are unable to pay for their lunches.

Prior to about 2017, the issue of lunch shaming does not seem to have been one which captured a significant amount of public awareness. That year, New Mexico became the first state to pass legislation against lunch shaming. The New Mexico law prohibited schools from requiring students with meal debt to wear wristbands or hand stamps, serving them substandard meals, or throwing their meals in the trash. It also required schools to provide students and parents with information on free and reduced-cost lunches and the paperwork necessary to access them, and made them responsible for applying for assistance on behalf of students the school has learned is eligible for assistance but whose parents have not applied for benefits. Several other states have passed similar laws, including California, Pennsylvania, and Oregon. Federal legislation introduced in 2017 in the House of Representatives and again in 2019 in the Senate would have prevented schools participating in the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program to refuse to serve students who cannot afford to pay for meals; however, both of these bills died. Other states, such as South Dakota, have considered such legislation but have not yet passed it into law.

In 2020, Tennessee HB1589/SB1593, also known as the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act, sponsored in the House by Reps. John Clemmons, Antonio Parkinson, Gloria Johnson, Jason Powell, and Bob Freeman (all Democrats), and in the Senate by Sen. Sara Kyle (also a Democrat), aimed to prevent similar behavior in the state of Tennessee, and was prompted by increased local and national attention to school districts engaging in such behavior as stamping the hands of students with meal debt and throwing away food they had just been served and replacing it with an alternate lunch option. These behaviors

would have been prohibited by the 2020 law; in addition, an amendment to the law proposed by Rep. John Ragan (Republican) would have required Children's Services to investigate parents who failed to provide students with money for meals. This bill also died.

Some of the objections to such legislation include the increased expense of being required to serve meals to all students, whether they are able to pay or not, and the fear that outlawing lunch shaming would remove incentive on the part of parents to pay meal debt. South Dakota's anti-lunch shaming bill was defeated on the grounds that the issue should be dealt with on a local, rather than state, level. Rep. Terri Lynn Weaver (a Republican) questioned whether the legislation was necessary; Rep. Scott Cepicky (a Republican) denied that lunch shaming was occurring in his district while also questioning how schools would be able to collect meal debts if the legislation passed; Rep. Mark White (another Republican) also questioned whether lunch shaming was occurring and took issue with the name of the bill, saying it was designed to make legislators who refused to support it look bad, but ultimately voiced his support for the bill, saying "it's a good bill for children."

### **Policy Impact**

The National School Lunch Program impacts those who can not afford school lunch. This program will provide hot meals to students so they will not be stigmatized. The current policy in place is the National School Lunch Program in Tennessee. This program provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to the students. There are federal guidelines and requirements in place to determine the student is eligible to receive free lunch. The intended beneficiaries are student's whose household income is at or below 130% of the federal poverty line. The negative impact on The Tennessee Anti- Lunch Shaming Act is if a child is unable to receive a hot meal. Another negative impact would be the students not getting the proper nutrition they need. Having the proper balanced lunch can provide proper learning opportunities needed for each child. Currently the only thing schools can do is ask for assistance from other locals, schools, or charities to help pay off students' debt.

## **Future Direction**

Universal free lunches, assist in student participation rates as well as increasing program coverage amongst youths most vulnerable to food poverty (Turner, Guthrie, Ralston, 2019). This policy will further address policies to protect student rights which will provide universal free lunch to all students. There are numerous topics that are missing information surrounding adequate conclusions for given questions surrounding “lunchroom shaming.” There are various questions that need to be addressed surrounding children’s rights in the lunchroom.

Research given has provided insight related to student advocacy in preventing shaming or stigmatizing in the cafeteria. One of the lingering questions at stake includes violating human rights for children. One question is if the lunchroom shaming is detrimental to their development including grades and attention span within the classroom? Are their rights including freedom being destroyed? What does the research demonstrate surrounding racial disparities in the lunchroom? Minority students tend to participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) at a disproportionately high rate, which explores whether state and local practices could potentially provide the basis of an actionable claim of impact under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Karnaze,2018).

The research will dive into the socioeconomic constraints which hinder parents and students from receiving universal free lunches. Another issue that needs to be addressed is protecting SNAP benefits for children across the U.S. SNAP is a policy which students may participate in that will assist families in food security, however does not fully cover food bills. The National Education Association (NSE) has been working to defend SNAP benefits. Free school meals would help fill in the insecurity gaps. The USDA is trying to accomplish through rulemaking what Congress rejected in 2018 when members approved a Farm Bill that rejected cuts to SNAP benefits due to the harm those cuts would have done to families.

There are millions of families who are automatically eligible for free lunches because they live in SNAP households and could be denied those meals under the proposed rule (Karnaze, 2018). Research

should foster children's dual rights to include freedom and equality across the states and not limited to demographics surrounding the child's school. Each school should implement universal anti-lunch shaming policies and therefore not limited to where the child resides. Studies show that eligible schools implement provisions for an end to racial disparities, as well as preserve SNAP benefits, providing freedom and equality to all students, while placing an end to lunchroom disparities.

### **Presentation of the Brand and Support Mapping**

#### **The Brand**

The title of our campaign is "Feeding our Future." The branding will focus on alleviating food insecurities within the lunchroom and keep students from being ostracized for the lack of funds necessary for a meal. No child should be stigmatized because they can not afford lunch.

#### **Opinions Across the State**

As a tool for continued growth and success in our campaign, a map was created to identify various groups that would provide a certain level of support and also groups that might potentially oppose our advocate campaign. These are shown in a Positional Map (Appendix C).

#### **Persuasive Arguments for Support**

There are numerous arguments surrounding the bill. One argument in favor of the passing of the bill is the fact that students are being punished for their parents inability to pay for school lunch. The second argument is that students are not receiving proper nutrition, especially if they do not get a balanced meal while at school. Students should not be shamed in front of their peers and sadly enough, this is what is occurring in the cafeterias across Tennessee. Every student should obtain a hot lunch or the same lunch that is given to the other students.. Food insecurities also lead to health impairments such as anemia, asthma, and childhood obesity.

Students who do not receive a hot lunch like others around them, may suffer mental health and self-esteem issues. Academic scores are affected due to being hungry and not able to eat lunch, or a

balanced, nutritious lunch. Students' social life and academic achievements are being affected due to the lack of funds to pay for lunch as schools are withholding these achievements and activities up until the lunch debts are paid. The students' should never be ostracized due to their families inability to afford school lunches.

### **Legislative Allies and Detractors**

A majority of the legislators that would be considered detractors fall on the conservative side. These are the ones that would need to be targeted in an effort to persuade them to increase their support of the advocacy campaign. A list of some of the allies and detractors can be found in Appendix D on the Legislators Positional Map.

### **Opposition**

School district offices may oppose the bill due to the potential cost. There is concern over how the cost for the free lunches will be absorbed and who will ultimately be responsible for it. The potential financial burden may be overwhelming for local school districts to take on given the existing lack of funds already present and the desire to not cut costs in other areas.

Taxpayers may also be against shouldering the financial responsibility of offering additional free lunches. Taxpayers who will not directly benefit from the bill may not believe the need to be great enough to take on the additional financial burden.

### **Plans to Form a Coalition**

Potential coalition members under logical partners include school staff, Advocates for Women's and Kids' Equality, Inc. (AWAKE), and the School Nutrition Association. School staff members have a front row seat to the effects and consequences of students' being food insecure and at times denied a nutritionally balanced lunch when they don't qualify for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Teachers are especially able to witness the negative consequences on children's learning and behavior in



the classroom when children do not have an adequate diet. The role of staff members would be to give testimony on how lunch shaming negatively affects students' ability to be successful in school.

Advocates for Women's and Kids' Equality, Inc. (AWAKE), is a nonprofit organization that has successfully assisted in passing multiple bills that have significantly impacted thousands of individuals in Tennessee. This organization is in support of the Tennessee Anti Lunch Shaming Act and has significant resources and connections available to help lobby and advocate for the passage of this bill. Their role is a lobbyist organization that dedicates their work to education and policy change in order to sustain the health, safety, and success of women and children.

The School Nutrition Association is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote school meal programs through education and advocacy. The role this association would play is that of an advocacy organization through their political action committee. Their focus is on students' education and the right to a child's physical needs, well-being, and accessibility to nutrition in school.

The National Education Association is another logical partner as they have already published statements in opposition to lunch shaming practices. The NEA is an advocacy organization made up of over 3 million members who work as educators in every level of public education. The NEA works on behalf of students and educators to advance equity and justice in the public school system. The role of this partner will be as an advocacy organization through their action center.

School administrators are potential odd bedfellows. Lunch-shaming tactics are perpetrated by administrators who are under pressure to get parents to pay meal debt; however, there may be administrators who are opposed to the use of these tactics and choose to support anti-lunch shaming legislation. These administrators may participate in the campaign as volunteers, or choose to support it financially; they may sign petitions or contact their representatives. They can also testify to the harmful effects of lunch shaming which they may have witnessed.

Tax payers are another potential odd bedfellow. It is not unusual for some taxpayers to be against supporting the funding for a bill that is not applicable to themselves. Historically taxpayers have spent billions of dollars on federal school lunch programs and thus may not be happy about more money being

put towards a bill such as the Tennessee Anti Lunch Shaming Act. However, at least some taxpayers may be won over by the fact that this legislation will not cost any additional taxpayer money to implement. Taxpayers may participate by signing petitions or contacting legislators directly, as well as by volunteering their time or money in support of the campaign, and thus may fill a variety of roles in the campaign.

## **Media Campaign**

### **Campaign Goals**

The primary objective of the media campaign is to raise awareness to the general public of the risk and presence of lunch shaming within Tennessee's school systems. The campaign will encourage citizens to contact their local legislators to show support for the passage of the bill, share information on social media, and sign a petition.

Another target audience would be state legislators. The media campaign will serve to educate them on the negative consequences of lunch shaming and the prevalence of food insecurity within our state. The goal is to have state legislators vote "yes" on the passage of the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act.

A third audience would be potential coalition members. By providing educational materials and information through the media campaign, new members could join in to further spread awareness across their existing audiences.

### **Media Avenues**

Social media will be the primary tool used in the media campaign. The social media avenues that will be utilized will be Facebook and Twitter. A Facebook page will help reach and educate a mixed population of users ranging from millennials to boomer generations. In addition, Twitter will also provide another form of educating and communicating with a large and unlimited audience of people in Tennessee. This campaign will elicit engagement from Twitter users by generating discussion using

hashtags, increasing awareness of the issue of lunch shaming, and encouraging more citizens to contact their representatives.

Along with social media avenues, earned media, including newspapers and radio, will be utilized to share our information. Newspaper advertising will provide the community with useful knowledge and information regarding the campaign. The campaign will be featured in *The Tennessean*, *The Daily News*, *Knoxville News Sentinel*, and *Chattanooga Times Free Press*. Interviews with radio stations will also play an important role in getting the message out. These interviews will be conducted on NPR and other local broadcasting networks and will inform the public about the bill as well as advocate for their involvement.

### **Media Content**

The campaign will begin with a press release sent out on September 2, 2022. This will serve to announce the launch date and purpose of the campaign (Appendix E). Both the social media and the earned media campaigns will roll out after that. A letter to the editor will be sent out to the newspapers: *The Tennessean*, *The Daily News*, *Knoxville News Sentinel*, and *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, and will include a brief statement of statistics of food insecure children in Tennessee and a description of the category of children not eligible for the National School Lunch Program. It will introduce the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act and urge readers to get involved (Appendix F). Ad space will be purchased for the newspapers. The ad will be a poster that contains information about the campaign. (Appendix H). An interview informing listeners about the Tennessee Anti-Shaming Lunch Act and its importance will be conducted on NPR as well as top radio stations in Chattanooga, Nashville, Memphis, and Knoxville. These will be done weekly during the morning show and will replay in the evening around 5 P.M. Questions will be answered regarding the gaps in current policies, negative effects of hunger for students, and our proposed plan of action. Listeners will be directed to our web and Facebook page to find easy ways to get involved.

The Facebook page will launch on September 6, 2022. In addition to pinned information about the current policies and their gaps, and the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act, the FB page will include

several links. These links include one to our website ([www.feedingourfuture.org](http://www.feedingourfuture.org)) and our Twitter account (@feedingourfuture), as well as having a “Get Involved” tab that will encourage readers to send a letter to their local legislators. There will also be a link to the General Assembly page (<https://www.capitol.tn.gov/legislators/>) where readers can find their local legislators and their email addresses and also a link to download a pre-written letter to send (Appendix I). A QR code will also be provided for readers to easily get involved by signing a petition created on Change.org. There will be “sponsored” posts that will go out daily reaching a larger audience. These will be a mix of educational posts about food insecure children and the food assistance gaps in schools, our social media poster (Appendix G), and information about the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act and its positive impact. A campaign member will go live every day during our campaign on our FB page at 1 P.M. to discuss different aspects of the campaign and allow for Q&A.

The Twitter account (@feedingourfuture) will also go live on September 6, 2022. A minimum of two tweets will go out daily. The campaign will use several hashtags to build a brand and identity for the campaign - #DoSomething.org, #Lifechanging, #Partneredup.org, #FollowFriday #FeedingourFuture, and #antilunchshaming. Each day there will be at least one tweet that links followers to our webpage ([www.feedingourfuture.org](http://www.feedingourfuture.org)) or our Facebook page. There will be a “Call to Action” tweet that connects followers to the General Assembly page for the ability to easily email their local legislators; a link to download a pre-written letter will also be included.

### **Implementation Steps**

The official launch date of the campaign will be September 6, 2022. The campaign will run for two months leading up to election day on November 8, 2022. A letter to the editor will be sent out to newspapers prior to September 6, 2022 while paid ad space in Newspapers will begin September 7, 2022. The Facebook page and Twitter account will launch on September 6, 2022. Radio interviews will begin on September 7, 2022.

1. A letter to the editor will be sent out by September 6, 2022 to *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, *The Tennessean*, *The Daily News*, and *Knoxville News Sentinel*. There will also be space purchased for an information poster to be published in these newspapers every Sunday and Wednesday during the campaign.
2. The Facebook page will launch on September 6, 2022. We will purchase sponsored posts to go out daily during the campaign to reach a larger audience. A member of the campaign will also go live at 1 P.M. everyday to discuss the campaign. These will continue through November 8, 2022.
3. The Twitter account will launch on September 6, 2022. A minimum of two tweets will be made daily during the campaign period.
4. Radio interviews will begin on September 7, 2022. Interviews will be done every Tuesday in Chattanooga and Nashville, Wednesday in Knoxville, and Friday in Memphis. The interview will be conducted during the morning show time slot and will be replayed at 5 P.M. the same day. This will continue through November 8, 2022.

## **Advocacy Plan**

### **Focus and Target Population**

The focus and target population will be children who cannot afford to pay for a hot school lunch. Many children are going hungry because their parents are unable to pay for their lunch. Another focus will be on the legislature. Intended beneficiaries are the students in the school. No child should have to worry about whether or not they get to eat lunch. Something needs to be done regarding this issue so the bill is utilizing voices to advocate for the students in need.

### **Advocacy Strategies**

There are many areas to consider when creating advocacy strategies to reach and involve people in your cause. When considering legislators and decision makers, a good place to start is by beginning to invest in relationships. Identify these key decision makers and begin to build rapport with them. When you are sharing information, be sure that the information is research based, scientific evidence, and not

opinions. Their support is essential to this process so it is important to begin this process early (Cullerton et al., 2018). It has been said that working with bureaucracy and legislature is the most beneficial way to influence policy (Hoefler, 2000).

It is also important to have a clear and unified solution developed. A complex explanation or solution will likely not be considered as these decision makers have many other issues they are looking at and considering. If it is too complex, it has a higher chance of being looked over (Cullerton et al., 2018). Simplicity is key. Another useful tool is sharing multiple perspectives and personal stories of those that are personally affected by the issue at hand (Cullerton et al., 2018). This helps to add validity to the topic. While another method to grab attention and influence could be to engage in public protest (Hoefler, 2000).

When considering strategies to involve those personally affected and the minority populations, it is also important to begin investing in relationships within these communities. It is possible that these populations may feel hesitant, therefore it is vital to build rapport and demonstrate the credibility of the cause with a goal and process. To accomplish this, choose a frame that appeals to shared common values that will resonate with the majority of this group (Cullerton et al., 2018). A potential way to magnify this frame would be to utilize media (Cullerton et al., 2018) (Hoefler, 2000). Another idea is to offer incentives for people to get involved. These incentives could include material items such as discounts or non material incentives such as contact with professional peers or the chance to participate in public affairs (Hoefler, 2000).

It has been stated that it is more effective to advocate as a large group of people rather than as an individual. To gain and maintain community members, be sure to have a clear message and plan of what you are advocating for. Also provide opportunities for members to gather together and interact with one another (Hoefler, 2000). There is strength in numbers.

Another area to consider is the frame that you choose to use. It has been found that economic and personal frames are the most effective. Economic frames bring forth information regarding cost and benefits while personal frames seek to invoke compassion from the audience by relaying personal stories of those directly affected by the issue. Both of these frames help to align the audience's views with a

campaign and encourage behavioral change (Anspach et al., 2019). Thus it would be beneficial to consider these frames and utilize them to help shape the advocacy efforts.

### **Inclusion of Target Population**

It would be ideal to have beneficiaries involved in our advocacy efforts. Parents and children who would benefit from this bill will be asked to call and write legislators to advocate for the passing of the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act. These beneficiaries will also be asked to give testimony statements in written form to be shared on social media and newspaper campaigns.

### **Potential Ramifications**

There are several positive ramifications of involving the consumer or beneficiaries and the family members or legal guardians. Involving these individuals will give them a sense of belonging and engagement as they assist in the process. This involvement also gives them a sense of purpose and value in knowing that they are assimilating and promoting change within their state. This is empowering and the process promotes safety, adequate nutrition, and overall well-being of students throughout the state of Tennessee. It empowers people to work towards changes in policies and advocate for the common good of themselves and those around them who may be impacted. Students and their parents may call legislators throughout the advocacy plan which gains the attention from their state legislators. Families may also get involved by providing personal testimonies which further gains ethos of others in the community as well as legislation. Personal testimonies provide positive advantages as it is more persuasive and other parents may view and get on board with the bill and wish to promote change even if they are not personally impacted by the issue.

There are several negative ramifications of family and student involvement. Online bullying may occur as an individual places themselves in the public eye. Trolling and bullying may occur due to low socioeconomic status. Some people may view this campaign through a negative lens which may cause friction to the individual or family as they disagree with the bill or merely do not support it or its cause.

An individual placed within public viewing risks stalking and other negative behaviors associated with being in the public eye. Students may face embarrassment or low self-esteem if they or their parents give a personal testimony as it risks them going to school and other peers inquiring about the issue. Others may treat them differently as they find them to be on a low income hierarchy.

### **Potential Opposition**

Opposition may occur as some members in the community may disagree with the advocacy. Opposing parties may not see a need for such change or do not find this topic an issue. Others may oppose the advocacy as they do not understand how it will fiscally align with not costing a taxpayer money or the state. A lack of knowledge and education surrounding the issue may promote this opposition. In an attempt to address and understand why such parties are against the advocacy, it is imperative to stand back and view what is happening and stand in their shoes while depersonalizing the issue. It is also vital that there is acknowledgment surrounding avoiding coercion as this will not be a healthy form of resolve. A healthy measure of approach is by merely understanding the other party's concerns and therefore meeting them where they are and not by forceful persuasion. Understanding the opposition is more powerful than an opponent who is baffling. In response to the opposition, it is better to be willing to compromise. The opponents may be willing to work in good faith in the future, especially if they witness a positive campaign. This in turn may lead to an opportunity to work together down the line.

### **Elected Officials to Approach**

We will first approach Sen. Sara Kyle and Rep. John Clemmons, who were the sponsors of the original Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act (SB0674/HB0815) in 2021. We will schedule face-to-face meetings with them through their offices to communicate our campaign's support for their bill. We will then contact the members of the Senate and House Education Committees: Sen. Jon Lundberg, Raumesh Akbari, Brandon Puttbrese, Lindsey Smith, Rusty Crowe, Ferrell Haile, Joey Hensley, Bill Powers, and Dawn White in the Senate; and Mark White, Chris Hurt, Charlie Baum, Michele Carringer, Scott Cepicky, Mark Cochran, Tandy Darby, John Gillespie, Yusuf Hakeem, Kirk Haston, Justin Lafferty, Harold Love,



Jr., Antonio Parkinson, and John Ragan. In addition, we will reach out to members of the House Children and Family Affairs Subcommittee: Mary Littleton, Rush Bricken, Rick Eldridge, Andrew Farmer, and Torey Harris. We will send them information regarding lunch shaming and the legislation which was previously considered by the Tennessee State Legislature.

Finally, we will invite everyone who visits our Facebook page, website, or who sees or hears any of our advertisements, to contact their legislators and urge them to support anti-lunch shaming legislation. This will demonstrate to lawmakers that the public is in support of this legislation and encourage them to take a public stand on the issue.

### **Strategy**

This bill received some bipartisan support the last time it was considered by the legislature; however, the sponsors and the majority of supporters were Democrats. Therefore, we will prioritize approaching Democratic legislators in the hopes of building a base of support for the bill within the education committees in both the House and Senate. We will also approach members of the subcommittee on children and family affairs in the House as this bill does relate to child welfare. We will call and if necessary visit the offices of their administrative staff to schedule meetings with each.

### **Key Talking Points:**

The key points we want to emphasize in our campaign are the harm caused to children by lunch shaming practices; the wastefulness of practices such as discarding food that has already been served to students because they cannot pay for it; the fact that banning lunch shaming will not cost the state or local school districts any money; and that banning lunch shaming does not prevent school districts from taking action to collect on meal debt from parents; they simply will not be allowed to use innocent children as leverage. In addition, we want to ask the question, if school districts are not doing these things anyway as

some critics of the legislation have implied, why is it a problem to pass a law saying they are not allowed to do them?

### **Progress Monitoring Plan**

To monitor the progress of our campaign, we will track the amount of attention the campaign receives from the media. We will also conduct surveys of voters to find out how many people are aware of the issue of lunch shaming and the progress of anti-lunch shaming legislation in Tennessee, as well as their level of concern for and engagement with the issue. We will also track the progress of the bill in the legislature. We will monitor the amount of attention the bill is receiving from stakeholders.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Feeding our Future campaign has proposed the following bill to be passed: The Tennessee Anti-Lunch Act SB0674/HB0815. The goal of this policy is to ensure that every student has access to a meal at school regardless of their ability to pay. It would ensure no student would be subject to lunch shaming if they are unable to pay. Currently, there is no policy in place specifically for this issue. We propose that the Tennessee Anti-Shaming Act bill be reintroduced without amendments.

In response to the current issues surrounding lunch shaming in Tennessee, the Feeding our Future campaign has been created in order to provide nutritious lunches for all students in Tennessee, regardless of their families socioeconomic status. The FOF team is communicating with both opposing parties of the bill, as well as supporters of the bill using social media platforms, radio stations, newspapers, as well as communication with local legislators. The FOF team is not only campaigning for the bill to be re-introduced, but also advocating for all students to equally receive nutritious meals and allow no student to be ostracized based upon circumstances that are out of their control.

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## Appendix A

## Fact Sheet

### Feeding Our Future

*Advocating for the reintroduction and passing of the Tennessee Anti Lunch Shaming Act.*

Everyday there are children who are not receiving the adequate nutrition needed to grow, develop, and thrive. In 2021, there were 5 million children that lived in food insecure households.<sup>1</sup> Food insecurity is defined by having limited or uncertain access to adequate food.<sup>2</sup> The National average for food insecurity is 10.4 percent and Tennessee is at 11.2 percent.<sup>1</sup>

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federal program that provides nutritionally balanced, ~~low-cost~~ or free lunches to qualifying children at school.<sup>10</sup> In 2021, the NSLP provided 2.2 billion meals with 98.9 percent of those being free or reduced cost.<sup>11</sup>

Food insecure children are at higher risk to have certain health issues such as anemia, asthma, and obesity.<sup>12</sup> These children also experience significant negative development effects and impairments in school.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Millions of children affected nationwide, thousands in Tennessee**

Throughout the United States, in October 2021, a reported 1.54 million students accrued \$262 million in meal debt per year, each child averaging about \$170 yearly, and over 75 percent of schools had unpaid meal debt.<sup>5</sup> In the state of Tennessee, nearly 8,000 students had meal debt in 2019 in Rutherford County alone.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Falling through the cracks:**

Although our country has created programs such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), there is a category of students that fall through the cracks. These students' household income is too high to qualify for the NSLP, yet they can't afford the lunch either. This third category of students becomes at risk of experiencing lunch shaming.<sup>3</sup> Lunch shaming can present itself in many forms including denying a child food if they are unable to pay, putting a stamp on a child's hand if they owe money for lunches, giving a child a cold meal instead of a hot one, or even throwing away a meal instead of giving it to the child that owes.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Anti-Lunch Shaming Act (SB0674 Kyle / HB0815 Clemmons)**

The Tennessee Anti Lunch Shaming Act has been drafted and introduced in both the House and the Senate. It passed in the Senate on 2/11/2021 but was taken off the agenda in the House on 2/1/2021. As a result, the bill has died, and no progress has been made.

#### **Proposed Solution**

We proposed the following bill to be passed: The Tennessee Anti-Lunch Act SB0674/HB0815. The goal of this policy is to ensure that every student has access to a meal at school regardless of their ability to pay. It would ensure no student would be subject to lunch shaming if they are unable to pay. Right now, there is no policy in place specifically for this issue. We propose that the Tennessee Anti-Shaming Act bill be reintroduced without amendments.<sup>7</sup>

#### **A fellow student recognizes the need to eliminate lunch shaming:**

In 2019 a California student, then 9-year-old Ryan Kyote, recognized fellow classmates being set apart for having a lunch debt. Ryan took it upon himself to save up his allowance and pay the \$74.80 balance for the whole 3rd grade class.<sup>9</sup>

### Organizations in support of the Tennessee Anti Lunch Shaming Bill:

- National Education Association.
- Advocates for Women's and Kids' Equality Inc.
- Food Research & Action Center

Question? Amber Vaudreuil 423-555-5555 (media contact)

Website: [www.feedingourfuture.org](http://www.feedingourfuture.org)

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## Policy Brief

### Policy Brief: Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act

#### Introduction

The Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act requires schools to provide a reimbursable meal to each student who requests one. The Act prohibits schools from requiring a student to throw away their meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal.

By reintroducing this bill, it will prevent schools from taking action against students who cannot pay for their lunch or pay off their lunch debt. The Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act will assist parents with obtaining free or reduced-price meals for their children.)

#### Current Legislative Status

- The bill was approved by the Senate on 2/11/2021, it was taken off the House agenda on 2/1/2021. This bill is supported in its entirety.
- Representative John Clemmons aided this bill being passed in the House.
- Senator Sara Kyle introduced the and supported the bill in the Senate.

- We need to reintroduce this bill and have it passed without any amendments. The government provides children with meal assistance, but some families do not qualify for that assistance.
- There is no current policy in place for the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act. The current policy for the Anti-Lunch Act is the National School Lunch Program [in Tennessee](#).

#### Positive Impact on Tennessee

- The National School Lunch Program will assist those who cannot afford to buy school lunch.
- The National School Lunch Program is a program that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or free lunches to children at school.
- The intended beneficiaries are student's whose household income is at or below 130% of the federal poverty line.
- The bill would require schools to assist parents and guardians with obtaining free or reduced meals for their children, and work to offer any other assistance available.
- The national school lunch program serves about 30 million children.



## Policy options and possible funding sources

Option 1: Advocates for Women's and Kids' Equality, Inc. (AWAKE)

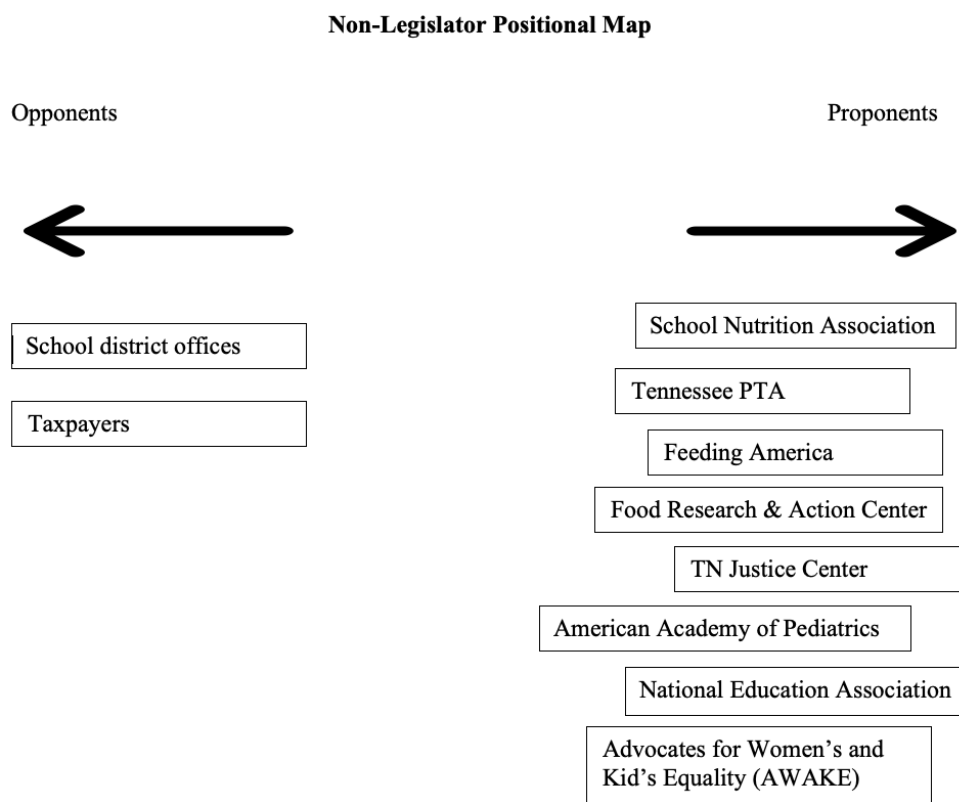
- AWAKE is a nonprofit organization that has successfully assisted in passing multiple bills that have significantly impacted thousands of individuals in Tennessee.
- This organization is in support of the Tennessee Anti Lunch Shaming Act and has significant resources and can advocate for the passing of this bill.

Option 2: The School Nutrition Association

- This association provides one nutritious meal to students attending low socioeconomic elementary and middle schools to ensure that students have the energy to learn during school.
- The School Nutrition association consists of advocating for students to receive a free meal to improve their physical and mental energy.
- They focus on students' education and the right to a child's physical needs, well-being, and accessibility to nutrition in school.

## Appendix C

### Non-Legislator Positional Map

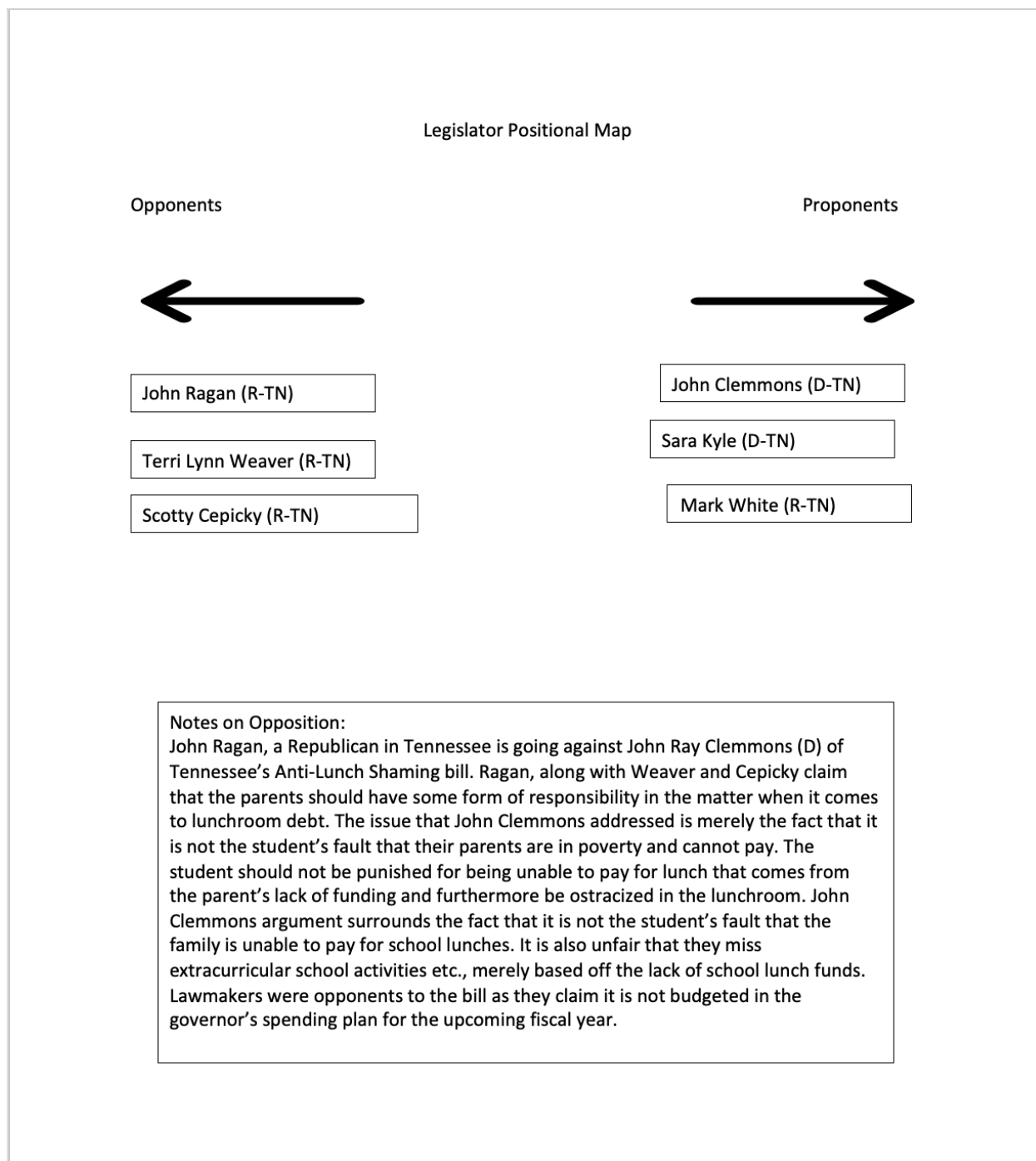


#### Notes on Opposition:

1. Inquiries have been made and significant opposition to the proposed bill has not been found.
2. School district offices may oppose the bill due to the potential cost. There is concern over how the cost for the free lunches will be absorbed and who will ultimately be responsible for it. The potential financial burden may be overwhelming for local school districts to take on given the existing lack of funds already present and the desire to not cut costs in other areas.
3. Taxpayers may also be against shouldering the financial responsibility of offering additional free lunches. Taxpayers who will not directly benefit from the bill may not believe the need to be great enough to take on the additional financial burden.

## Appendix D

### Legislator Positional Map



## Appendix E

### Press Release

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Feeding Our Future  
Amber Vaudreuil  
423-555-5555  
[amberv@southern.edu](mailto:amberv@southern.edu)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Feeding Our Future announces the launch of the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act campaign.**

Collegedale, TN – Feeding our Future is excited to announce the launch of the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act campaign, a campaign that will address a large gap within current policies that greatly affects students that currently fall through the cracks given the current policy requirements. These students do not qualify for assistance with school lunch meals nor are they able to afford them. These students become vulnerable to experiencing lunch shaming. The official launch date for this campaign is September 6, 2022.

Feeding our Future believes the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act will ensure all Tennessee public school students have access to a hot, nutritious lunch at school without the fear of being shamed for not being able to pay.

Feeding our Future will have active pages on Facebook and Twitter as well as features in newspaper and radio in Nashville, Memphis, and Knoxville. Join the cause by following us on our social media pages to learn more about how you can get involved and make a difference; our handle will be @feedingourfuture.

Feeding our Future is passionate about ensuring all children have access to healthy, nutritious food every day. We believe no child should be denied food at school or treated differently based on their family's inability to pay. Let's make sure we feed our future!

###

## Appendix F

### Letter to Editor

Amber Vaudreuil  
[amberv@feedingourfuture.org](mailto:amberv@feedingourfuture.org)  
423-555-5555

RE: Letter to the Editor

In Tennessee, 1 in 6 children faces hunger. When we live in a country of abundance, statistics such as this are completely unacceptable. We are falling short and letting our children down. There must be a solution to ensure we are feeding the kids that are falling through the cracks, especially those that are in our public school system. For many that fall into the food insecure category, a school lunch may be their only chance to experience a good and nutritious meal each day. Although our country has the National School Lunch Program, there is a category of children that do not qualify for the assistance yet are still unable to afford a school lunch.

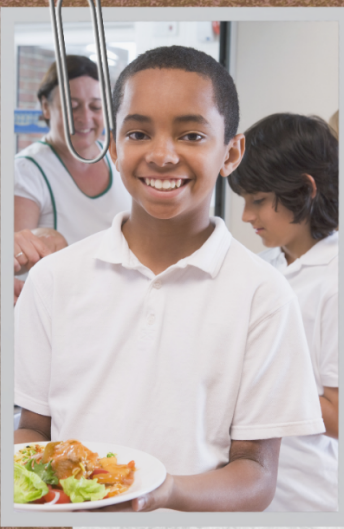
This is where we can do better. By re-introducing and passing the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act, Tennessee will be taking action to ensure every child gets a meal regardless of their household's ability to pay. No child will fall victim to potential "lunch shaming" when their lunch account comes up empty. Children will no longer receive consequences for a reality that is out of their control.

It's time for Tennessee residents to take action. Fight for our children who are unable to fight for themselves. It's time to make sure we are Feeding our Future. Visit our website to learn more [www.feedingourfuture.org](http://www.feedingourfuture.org).

**Appendix G**

**Social Media Poster**





# NO ONE SHOULD GO HUNGRY ESPECIALLY OUR FUTURE!

You Can Make a Change!

Call your state legislators and urge them to take action!



Did you have lunch today?  
Age, 26th  
Weight, 156 lbs.  
Height, 176 cm



Sign our petition here. or go to change.org



@feedingourfuture



www.feedingourfuture.org



Page: Feeding our Future

LIVE

To learn more join our live stream at 1 pm daily



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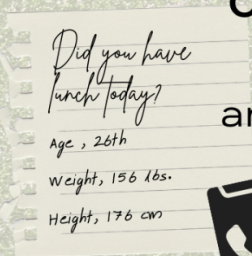
**Appendix H**  
**Newspaper Ad**



# NO ONE SHOULD GO HUNGRY ESPECIALLY OUR FUTURE! STOP LUNCH SHAMING!

You Can Make a Change!

Call your state legislators and urge them to take action!



Feeding our Future is excited to announce the launch of the Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act campaign, a campaign that will address a large gap within current policies that greatly affects students that currently fall through the cracks given the current policy requirements. These students do not qualify for assistance with school lunch meals nor are they able to afford them. These students become vulnerable to experiencing lunch shaming. The official launch date for this campaign is September 6, 2022.



@feedingourfuture



www.feedingourfuture.org



Sign our petition here, or go to [change.org](https://www.change.org)



Page: Feeding our Future

LIVE

To learn more join our live stream at 1 pm daily



## Appendix I

### Sample Letter/Email Communication

Dear →

This letter is regarding the imperative need of the re-introduction and passage of a proposed bill intended to end lunchroom shaming and financial constraints facing students and their families in our state of Tennessee. The bill which is referred to in this letter is The Tennessee Anti-Lunch Act [SB0674/HB0815](#). The Tennessee Anti-Lunch Shaming Act has been drafted and introduced in both the House and the Senate previously. It passed in the Senate on 2/11/2021 but was taken off the agenda in the House on 2/1/2021. As a result, the bill has died, and no progress has been made.

Although our country has created programs such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), which is meant to provide nutritionally balanced, low cost or free lunches to students each day - there is a category of students that fall through the cracks. Lunch shaming can present itself in many forms including denying a child food if they are unable to pay, putting a stamp on a child's hand if they owe money for lunches, giving a child a cold meal instead of a hot one, or even throwing away a meal instead of giving it to the child that owes lunch money. Studies have shown that children who are set apart, or "shamed", have suffered negative consequences from embarrassment and even impaired learning.

We are asking for your support, and we appreciate any questions or tokens of advice you may have for the passing of this bill in order to help feed the future of students who are lacking the means to attain a nutritious meal each day in the lunchroom. Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,