



Newsletter From Rep. Tara Shephard District 79

February 14, 2025

Week 5 of the 2025 Regular Session

In the 5th week of the 2025 Regular Session, the Arkansas House passed several bills focusing on education, healthcare, and food security.

SB59: An Act to Provide Each Public School Student with Breakfast at No Cost

This bill ensures that every student in Arkansas public schools will be entitled to one free breakfast per school day, regardless of their eligibility for federally funded meals. Funded through medical marijuana tax revenue, the bill was passed with the goal of addressing food insecurity among students. Arkansas ranked as the hungriest state in the nation in 2023 with 18.9% of households experiencing food insecurity.

SB142: Bell to Bell, No Cell Act

The House also passed SB142, which addresses the growing concern over cell phone use in schools. Known as the Bell to Bell, No Cell Act, this bill mandates that public and charter schools prohibit students from using cell phones and personal electronic devices during the school day. There are exceptions, including emergency situations, and schools will be required to create policies in compliance with the guidelines set by the bill. These include allowing for the use of phones for special events, medical reasons, or for students accessing college coursework through two-factor authentication.

HB1427: Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies Act

HB1427 represents a major step forward in supporting maternal health in Arkansas. The bill, which is a \$45.3 million investment, expands access to healthcare for pregnant women. It establishes presumptive Medicaid eligibility for expectant mothers, creates reimbursement pathways for doulas and community health workers, and broadens Medicaid coverage.

