



## 10/11/23 meeting re: Restructuring Aging & Disability at the State Level

TN has a rapidly growing older population and poor state rankings that underscore the need for strategic planning and bold action to ensure our residents can live and age well. In Tennessee, older adults' overall health ranks 44<sup>th</sup> in the nation and 48<sup>th</sup> in physical activity. In addition, **TN's ranking is 47<sup>th</sup> in long-term services & supports for older adults and 51<sup>st</sup> in support of family caregivers** (2023 AARP LTSS Scorecard).

**Despite its mandate to provide leadership relative to aging & disability issues, TCAD as currently structured is not providing the strategic leadership, planning and inter-agency collaboration needed to address critical issues, improve systems, and build infrastructure for our state's rapidly growing older population.**

### Opportunity

The Governor, with input from TCBA and other stakeholders, has an opportunity to put a bold plan together that elevates aging & disability, creates efficiency and improves coordination & delivery of services.

The TN Commission on Aging & Disability was established to provide leadership relative to aging & disability issues, and was designed to be a vehicle for coordination and collaboration. This requires representation from relevant departments (Health, Mental Health, DIDD, Veterans, Human Services, TennCare) as well as the TN Council on Developmental Disabilities, AARP, TN Disability Coalition and private citizens. **With elevation and reorganization into a lead department, TCAD could function as intended, and could help advance a strategic Multisector Plan for Aging in Tennessee. This plan is very important for helping older Tennesseans and their families, and needs a robust department behind it that will be a proactive convener, facilitator and catalyst.**

### Recommendations

- 1. Gov. Lee can endorse the Multisector Plan for Aging effort and ensure the optimal structure and resources for implementation**, leaving a lasting legacy that benefits older Tennesseans and their families for decades to come. There has been positive progress already through the multisector planning process, successfully engaging stakeholders throughout Tennessee from all sectors: public, nonprofit, private, and philanthropic.
  - In order for it to become operational and achieve the desired impact, **the Governor's office and state leaders should make it a priority with dedicated staff and resources.** Other states that have successfully advanced multisector plans for aging have noted the **importance of a coordinating person/entity in the Governor's office and a strong Executive Order that gives them the authority and requires other state departments to participate in meaningful, measurable ways.**
- 2. Gov. Lee can create a Department of Aging and Disability that merges the programs, services, and responsibilities of DIDD, TCAD, and APS.** We propose this reorganization/merger for improved efficiency and effectiveness in serving older adults, persons with disabilities and their families.
  - A Department of Aging and Disability would consolidate all of TennCare's partners who implement CHOICES: namely, DIDD & TCAD/AAADs (i.e., CHOICES 1,2 & 3 = "aging and disability," CHOICES 4,5,6,7 & 8 (ECF) = "IDD"). Many of the providers are the same.
  - A cabinet level department can establish new organizational structures for fostering inter-departmental and cross sector collaboration and innovation to address pressing issues like housing affordability and supply, transportation, financial security and long-term services and supports.

TN Coalition for Better Aging Members attending: Dr. Jim Powers & Grace Smith, AgeWell Middle TN, TCBA Co-Chairs; Carol Westlake & Donna DeStefano, TN Disability Coalition; Mia McNeil & Kimberly Spaulding, AARP-TN; Dianne Oliver, West End Home Foundation; Aaron Bradley, East TN Area Agency on Aging & Disability