



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF TENNESSEE**

President  
**Marian Ott**  
Nashville

August 16, 2018

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
**Debra Gould**  
Nashville

Wendy Long, MD  
Director, Division of TennCare  
310 Great Circle Road  
Nashville, TN 37243

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
**Rynn Dupes**  
Knoxville

Dear Dr. Long:

Secretary  
**Judy Poulson**  
Knoxville

The League of Women Voters of Tennessee has some very serious concerns about the addition of work requirements for maintaining eligibility in TennCare, which are explained more fully below. A TennCare work requirement should enable TennCare recipients *to maintain health and well being needed to find and sustain living wage jobs that can ensure economic security and independence for themselves and their families*. This goal, not numbers of hours worked each week or month, should define the measures for success. In fact, the number of hours worked should remain flexible and tailored to each individual's life situations, skills, health status, and the diversity of work opportunities available in recipients' communities.

Treasurer  
**Lee Fairbend**  
Nashville

DIRECTORS  
**Shelley Ames**  
Hendersonville

Here are some of our chief concerns and comments:

**Leslie Collum**  
Murfreesboro  
  
**Jo Ann Garrett**  
Oak Ridge

**Need for coordination with TANF/SNAP and development of support services.** Many TennCare recipients with families are also recipients of TANF and/or SNAP support, and required to meet work requirements for those programs as well. It would make sense for administrative efficiency and effectiveness that TennCare work requirements are aligned with, and no more stringent, than the requirements of these existing programs. Likewise the current exemptions available under TANF and SNAP—for pregnant women, for primary caregivers of dependents (not defined by age but by need), for individuals with health issues that create barriers to available employment, for victims of domestic violence, and for individuals living in areas of high unemployment—should be available to TennCare recipients.

**Barbara Gay**  
Nashville  
  
**Katrina Gay**  
Hendersonville

**Sherry Hewlett**  
Memphis

**Claudia Lever**  
Oak Ridge

The overlap among these programs provides an opportunity for the on-going development of a multi-agency, coordinated program of support that would include occupational aptitude assessment; exemptions and incentives for participation in GED and post-secondary educational, job training, and skill development programs; mentoring programs; employment placement services; transportation assistance; child care and after school care subsidies; case coordination with SNAP, TANF, and related programs; and health, substance abuse, and mental health-related case management.

**Jo Singer**  
Franklin  
  
**Hazel Thornton**  
Nashville

**Peg Watkins**  
Memphis

**Qualifying activities.** For many TennCare recipients, the fastest route to independence may not be a job, but working on a degree or developing skills that could lead to a sustainable career. Work requirements should be deemed met for persons enrolled in:

- Educational programs—High school, GED, ESL program, community college, college or graduate education
- Vocational training, job skills training, apprenticeship or internship, volunteer experiences
- Participation in a state approved workforce participation program

**Need for reasonable and compassionate exemptions.** In addition to the exemptions provided by TANF and SNAP, exemptions or extended exemption periods should be made available for those who become eligible for TennCare due to the situations listed below which require several months of transition:

- Birth, adoption, or foster care placement of a child
- Divorce or legal separation
- Loss of other health coverage due to the death of a family member
- Move to Tennessee related to transitional work opportunities—such as seasonal farmwork or construction
- Moving to or from a shelter or other transitional housing

The LWV Tennessee also urges that full or at least part-time exemptions be considered for those in circumstances that make work in many types of jobs difficult or dangerous:

- Primary caregivers of dependents under the age of 12 so that children may receive supervision in the hours, weeks, and months students are not in school if reliable child care supports are not available and affordable
- Primary caregivers for a nondependent relative or other person with a chronic, incapacitating health condition, when other home care supports are not available and affordable
- Individuals with physical or mental health disabilities who cannot find work opportunities that offer reasonable accommodations
- Individuals of any age with serious and complex treatments
- Individuals over the age of 50 with chronic health conditions
- Individuals who have left incarceration in the last 12 months or who are unable to find work due to their incarceration history
- Former foster care youth under 26
- Individuals under the age of 19
- Homeless individuals
- Individuals in a certified drug court or treatment program
- Part-time or full-time students
- Individuals who do not have access to reliable transportation to worksites

- Individuals who are unable to find jobs due to lack of employment opportunities in their communities that match their skills and abilities

**Need to minimize potential loss of coverage.** Implementation of work requirements for Medicaid expansion populations have led to losses of coverage, and higher than expected implementation costs that could be invested in care. To ensure that this is not a consequence of implementation in Tennessee the LWV urges that the following elements should be in put in place:

- Supports for assisting applicants in completing their applications
- Health literacy consultation and beta-testing to ensure that reporting documents are in plain language and enable applicants to complete accurately and efficiently and if possible through a phone enabled app that is readily accessible in all parts of the state
- Grace periods for non-compliance and coverage during appeals
- Self-attestation of participation in qualifying activities and exemption qualifications

The LWV would like to acknowledge the work of the Tennessee Health Care Campaign in compiling recommendations through a series of listening sessions across the state that we have incorporated in our statement today. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input *before* the waiver request is submitted to CMS. We hope that you will notify us when that submission occurs so that we can provide further comments in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Marian Ott  
LWV Tennessee President

Debby Gould  
LWV Tennessee Advocacy and Action Chair