

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hundreds of Tennesseans Convene to Discuss Solutions to Major Problems Created by the State's Poor Health

Since August, more than 200 community and business leaders have met in six cities across Tennessee as part of the "State of the State's Health" roundtable series

NASHVILLE – The Governor's Foundation for Health and Wellness, a non-profit organization dedicated to enabling and encouraging Tennesseans to lead healthier lives through its Healthier Tennessee® initiative, recently concluded a statewide "State of the State's Health" series, which invited local leaders to discuss the increasing economic impact of poor health in Tennessee.

"Over the last three months across the state of Tennessee, we have engaged local leaders in eye-opening discussions about the significant negative financial consequences of our current health status," said Richard Johnson, CEO of the Governor's Foundation for Health and Wellness. "During these discussions, participants arrived at a number of potential solutions to combat this statewide health epidemic. As Tennessee prepares for a new governor and major changes in the General Assembly in 2019, we look forward to continuing our work for the sake of economic prosperity and improved health outcomes for current and future Tennesseans."

The events, held in Knoxville, Kingsport, Jackson, Memphis, Nashville and Chattanooga, invited regional leaders to participate in active discussions on Tennessee's current health status. Over the course of the series across the state, three overarching themes emerged:

- The critical importance of daily physical activity and better nutrition programs for children, especially those at early ages;
- The need for public policy to address the high-rate of tobacco usage and other causes of chronic disease in Tennessee;
- The recognition among business leaders that the workplace can play an important role in employee health through preventive programs and insurance benefits plans.

As part of the series, key findings were presented from the non-partisan Sycamore Institute's [November 2017 study](#) on the ways Tennesseans' relatively poor health hinders the economy and workforce development. Tennessee trails most other states on a wide range of key health indicators and outcomes, including chronic disease, mortality rates and disabilities. Other findings include:

- **Poor health shrinks our workforce.** Healthier people are more likely to work or actively seek work than people in poor health. Combined with the opioid epidemic, which has accelerated the decline of labor force participation, Tennessee’s labor pool continues to shrink.
- **Poor health reduces our productivity.** Healthier workers are more productive, missing fewer days of work for health reasons. Tennessee’s high rates of just three chronic diseases (diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease) cost an estimated \$280 million in lost productivity in 2015. With rampant substance abuse in Tennessee, the productivity level continues to fall.
- **Poor health makes Tennesseans costlier to employ.** Employers are the single-largest source of health insurance coverage in Tennessee, and costs increase when workers are less healthy. Tennessee’s high rates of diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease were responsible for an estimated \$920 million in employer health care costs in 2015.

Representatives from organizations across the state participated in Healthier Tennessee’s “State of the State’s Health” roundtable series to create greater awareness and discuss solutions to the various preventable health issues Tennesseans face. Participating companies include but are not limited to:

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| • AutoZone | • Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare |
| • Ballad Health | • Pilot Flying J Corporation |
| • BlueCross BlueShield Tennessee | • Pinnacle Financial Partners |
| • Bush Brothers & Company | • Radio Systems Corporation |
| • CoreCivic | • University of Tennessee Medical Center |
| • FedEx | • Unum |
| • First Tennessee | • Vanderbilt University Medical Center |
| • Nissan | • Volkswagen Chattanooga |
| • International Paper | • West Tennessee Healthcare |
| • LifePoint Health | |

[Watch the video from the roundtable, which features Governor Bill Haslam, here.](#) More information on Healthier Tennessee can be found at www.HealthierTN.com.

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The [Governor's Foundation for Health and Wellness](#) is a non-profit corporation dedicated to enabling and encouraging Tennesseans to lead healthier lives. Based in Nashville, the Foundation brings together a statewide coalition of employers, health insurers, hospital systems, local governments, school systems and healthcare-focused foundations and community organizations to effect positive, measurable change. The Foundation’s Healthier Tennessee initiative strives to increase the number of Tennesseans who are physically active for at least 30 minutes five times a week, promote a healthy diet, and reduce the number of people who use tobacco.