



OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCATE

2023 Annual Report

Jason E. Mumpower
Comptroller of the Treasury



Paige Donaldson
Small Business Advocate

The 2023 Annual Report of the Office of Small Business Advocate is prepared in accordance with Tennessee Code Annotated § 8-4-706. This report provides an overview of the office's activities during Fiscal Year 2023.

MESSAGE FROM THE SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCATE



Paige Donaldson
Small Business Advocate

Dear Members of the 113th General Assembly,

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do to create an environment where small businesses can thrive in the State of Tennessee. Your leadership has put Tennessee on the map as the premier location for new businesses to call home. Actually, a recent report released in a partnership between Secretary of State Tre Hargett's Office and the University of Tennessee Knoxville's Boyd Center for Business and Economic Research states the third quarter of 2023 had the highest number of new business filings in the 25 years they have been collecting data. New businesses are good for all Tennesseans because they mean more jobs, revenue, and opportunities for our citizens.

As Tennessee's Small Business Advocate, I have greatly enjoyed getting to work with some of you and your constituents over the last year. I continue to stand ready to help your constituents receive the information and assistance they need in their endeavors to start or continue their small businesses.

As I am sure you can imagine, with approximately 30 state agencies regulating small businesses in Tennessee, the process of navigating state government can often feel overwhelming and burdensome for your constituents who are starting a small business or who already own one. The Office of Small Business Advocate was created to aid small business owners who are dealing with the complexity of state government. This office can be their one-stop shop when they have questions or concerns about their small business's interaction with state government.

Every minute is precious for a small business owner, and I want to do everything in my power to ensure they are not wasting time dealing with confusing bureaucracy when they could be growing their business. If you or any of your constituents have questions about running a small business in Tennessee, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paige Donaldson".

Paige Donaldson
Small Business Advocate

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*For additional information about the
Office of Small Business Advocate, visit:
www.comptroller.tn.gov/OSBA/*




HISTORY OF THE OFFICE

Chapter 1129 of the Public Acts of 2010 establishes the Office of Small Business Advocate (Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 8-4-701 *et seq.*) The Office of Small Business Advocate is housed in the Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury and serves as a point of contact to state government for Tennessee small business owners. The mission of the Comptroller's Office is to make government work better. The Office of Small Business Advocate supports this mission by making government work better for Tennessee's small business owners.

RAISING AWARENESS

The Small Business Advocate is always looking for opportunities to speak to local civic and community organizations. Throughout the past year, the Small Business Advocate has spoken to several groups and met with leaders in the business community across the state of Tennessee to let them know about the services the office provides to small business owners. State legislators have been an enormous help in facilitating conversations with relevant groups. Please let the Office of Small Business Advocate know if you would like the Small Business Advocate to speak to one of your local organizations.

During the past fiscal year, the Office of Small Business Advocate raised awareness by:

-  Participating in three speaking engagements with civic groups across Tennessee;
-  Speaking with legislative staffers, legislators, their constituents; and
-  Attending events or meeting with small business owners and leaders in the small business community.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does the Office of Small Business Advocate do?

The Office of Small Business Advocate is housed within the Office of Comptroller of the Treasury and was established to make state government more responsive to Tennessee's small business owners. When a Tennessee small business owner has questions about which department they need to speak with in state government, or if they are experiencing difficulties with a state department or agency, they may contact the Office of Small Business Advocate.

How does the Office of Small Business Advocate define a "small business"?

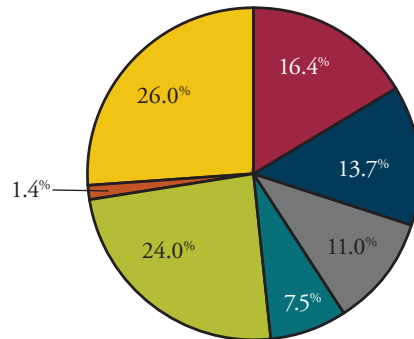
Tennessee Code Annotated § 8-4-701 defines a "small business" as a business entity, including its affiliates, that employs fifty (50) or fewer full-time employees.

When should a small business owner contact the Office of Small Business Advocate?

If a small business owner does not know whom to contact or what procedure to use, then he or she should contact the Office of Small Business Advocate. If a small business owner has attempted to resolve an issue with a department or agency and they are unable to reach a solution, or if a small business owner is having difficulties navigating state government, then he or she should contact the Office of Small Business Advocate.

OFFICE INQUIRIES

- Regulatory Compliance - 24
- "How To" Questions - 20
- Licensure - 16
- Financial Assistance - 11
- Tax Information - 35
- Procurement - 2
- Other - 38



Since its creation, the Office of Small Business Advocate has assisted in resolving approximately 4,000 inquiries.

From July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, the Office of Small Business Advocate assisted small business owners with 146 inquiries.

AGENCY CONTACTS

As required by Tennessee Code Annotated § 8-4-703, the 30 state departments and agencies that report having regulatory authority over business have provided the Office of Small Business Advocate with a contact person.

These contacts assist in the resolution of issues involving their agency. A complete list of agency contacts is available on the office's website at <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/OSBA>.

AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS

Tennessee Code Annotated § 8-4-705 requires the Office of Small Business Advocate to evaluate and report annually to the General Assembly on state government's responsiveness to small business owners' concerns.

On January 1, 2013, a rating system for timeliness of response was implemented. If an agency provides assistance in 7 days or less, then the agency receives a rating of 5 stars. If an agency provides assistance between 8 and 14 days, then the agency receives 4 stars. If an agency provides assistance after more than 14 days, then the agency receives one star. All agencies received a 5 star rating in fiscal year 2023.

