Chair Opening Remarks – MCCOA General Meeting
9 November 2026

The Commission on Aging welcomes diverse perspectives, constructive debate, and respectful disagreement as essential elements of our work. While we may not always agree, all commissioners, staff, and members of the public engage in good-faith dialogue that respects the dignity of every participant.

Our work is guided by the following foundational principles:

- Collaboration: Fostering community and agency partnerships to strengthen engagement, transparency, and actionable outcomes.
- Transparency: Supporting data-based, transparent decision-making processes and sharing metrics with all stakeholders.
- Enhancing Outcomes: Strengthening performance tracking and data collection to drive decisions that directly benefit older adults.
- Communication: Exchange information, recommendations, and comments on the topic simply and directly without adding confusing or unnecessary details, choosing precise words, sticking to the main point, ensuring your core idea is easy to grasp, and utilize active listening to understand and respond to insights and comments from others.
- Goals, priorities, and action plans: Ensure all objectives and action plans follow the SMART framework (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound).

During our meeting need to actively support:

- Respectful Dialogue
    - Support freedom of speech while valuing a diversity of opinions.
    - Maintain a civil, courteous demeanor at all times.
    - Refrain from questioning the character, integrity, or motives of any meeting participant.
    - Avoid threatening, profane, or abusive language that disrupts or impedes the orderly conduct of the meeting.
- Active Listening
    - Practice active listening to understand other perspectives, emotions, and needs.
    - Focus on building rapport and trust to prevent misunderstandings and find common ground.
    - Acknowledge and validate that the concerns of others have been heard, which is critical for achieving compromise, resolution, and community acceptance.

Behavior that causes distress, disrupts the flow of the meeting, or undermines the dignity of participants will not be tolerated. Prohibited actions include:

- Aggressive Interruptions: Cutting people off mid-sentence, talking over others, or using a patronizing or condescending tone.
- Open Multitasking: Checking emails, browsing, or sending text messages while others are speaking.
- Side Conversations: Whispering, private messaging, or mocking others during a presentation or discussion.
- Blame Shifting: Weaponizing the meeting to find scapegoats for a problem rather than focusing on constructive solutions.
- Dismissive Language: Using words or gestures that belittle or disregard another participant's input.

To maintain an orderly and productive environment, anyone engaging in disruptive behavior or disrespectful dialogue will receive an initial warning from the Chair. If the behavior continues after a warning, the participant will be asked to leave the meeting.

Respectfully,
Lauren Elkin
MCCOA Chair