



NC Coalition on Aging

Agencies, organizations, and individuals that represent and support our state's aging population coming together to give voice to issues that affect older North Carolinians.

The older adult population in North Carolina is growing by leaps and bounds and as such, their needs are increasing.

- Today, 1 in 5 – over 2 million people in the state – are age 60 and over. By 2033, about 1 in 4 will be over 60, and people over 85 will be the fastest growing population group.
- Effective this year, it is estimated that there are more people in the state over the age of 60 than under the age of 18. Our 65+ population will increase in the next 20 years from 1.6 to 2.6 million.

2019 Legislative Priorities

Each year after dialogue among its members, the Coalition develops legislative priorities. The five issues identified here are the Coalition's priorities for 2019; however, they do not represent the entirety of the issues which the Coalition supports and on which it will take a position.

Invest state dollars in **adult protective services (APS), mandated core services provided by county departments of social services to our state's most vulnerable adults.**

- In recent years, there has been a major increase in the need for APS services. In 2009, there were 17,073 reported cases of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of adults. In SFY 17-18, this number increased to 30,128 reported cases of which 15,563 were "screened-in" by county departments of social services to determine if the adults reported were in needs of APS. Abuse, neglect or exploitation was found for 6,066 cases, and many of these cases were very complex.
- In SFY 17-18, \$26.2 million was expended on APS. Funding was 0.01% state, 82% county, and 18% federal Social Service Block Grant.
- There are growing challenges as the number of APS cases increase and many counties, particularly low wealth counties, are struggling to find the money to provide needed services and to adequately carry out mandated responsibilities.

Close the **health insurance coverage gap in the state.**

- There are an estimated 400,000+ low-income people in the state who have no affordable health insurance options available to them. Many of these fall into the category of those 55+ who are most likely to have pre-existing conditions that if not treated will result in bigger problems as they age.
- Closing the coverage gap will provide access to preventive care for this population and result in an influx of additional funding to the state that can support our health care delivery system.

Increase the recurring state funding for the Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) by \$7 million.

- The Block Grant is the primary funding source for services, including high demand services such as home delivered meals and in-home aides, for older adults not eligible for Medicaid. Most recipients of services are frail and have low to moderate income and many live alone. The Block Grant helps them to remain independent and living in the community. It combines federal and state dollars along with local matching funds.
- The state is losing ground in its efforts to help at-risk older adults in the community through the Block Grant with waiting lists growing and fewer individuals being served each year. In January of 2019, there were 10,600 seniors on waiting lists for services.
- An appropriation of \$7 million would make a huge impact: The waiting list could be reduced by approximately one-third.

Increase funding for the Housing Trust Fund and increase the Homestead Property Tax Exemption to help ensure older adults and persons with disabilities have safe and affordable housing.

- The state has a shortage of safe and affordable housing and the recent hurricane has increased the lack of adequate housing for older and disabled adults, populations who were hit hard by the storm.
- Housing has been identified as a key social determinant of health, and the lack of adequate housing can be a factor in vulnerable adults no longer being able to remain independent in the community.
- The Housing Trust Fund has been a valuable resource for rehabbing and providing modifications to homes and for developing affordable housing for seniors and persons with disabilities. The current funding for the Trust Fund, \$7.66 million, is not adequate to address the growing housing crisis.
- Paying the property taxes on their home is a burden for many seniors and persons with disabilities. The Homestead Property Tax Exemption provides low-income persons 65 and older and those who are permanently disabled some property tax relief. In 2018, the total income for eligibility for a homeowner and their spouse could not exceed \$30,200, and the amount excluded from taxation was the first \$25,000 or 50% (whichever is greater) of assessed value of the permanent residence. The General Assembly has not examined property tax relief for older and disabled adults for ten years.

Conduct a comprehensive study about how the state can better support family caregivers, particularly caregivers who are in the workforce so they can continue to work.

- There are over 1.28 million family caregivers in the state providing care to an adult with limitations in daily activities.
- Families provide at least 80% of all care services needed to help older relatives live in their homes. They are the backbone of our long-term care system.
- More than 60% of family caregivers work, and of this number approximately 60% report making work accommodations because of caregiving. Approximately 10% say they have to give up work entirely in order to care for their relative. When caregivers cut back on hours or leave the workforce, they often lose benefits, including health insurance, and their retirement income, including Social Security, may be less.

To see a list of the Coalition on Aging's agency and organization members in support of these priorities, go to <http://www.nccoalitiononaging.org/members.html>. For more information about the Coalition or on its priorities, contact Mary Bethel, Executive Director of the Coalition, at mmbethel72@gmail.com or (919) 818-0881.