



COMING TOGETHER TO ADVOCATE FOR OLDER ADULTS

NC Coalition on Aging April Update – April 18, 2017

GOOD NEWS - Aging Subcommittee Bill in Committee April 19 – We are pleased to report that [House Bill 248](#), Establish Aging Subcommittee of Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, is on the agenda for the House Health Committee on Wednesday, April 19, at 2:00 p.m. This Bill which is a priority of the Coalition on Aging would examine the State's delivery of services for older persons in order to (i) determine their service needs and (ii) make recommendations to the HHS Oversight Committee on how to address their service needs. The Bill also is directed to study issues pertaining to working caregivers for older persons which is a first step in addressing a second priority of the Coalition which is to pass legislation that will support working family caregivers and help keep them in the workforce. Special thanks to Bill sponsors Reps. Josh Dobson (a co-chair of the House Health Committee), Rep. Becky Carney, Rep. Michele Presnell, and Rep. Donna White. The Committee meeting will be in room 544 of the Legislative Office Building. **If your schedule allows, please attend the Committee meeting in support of the Bill.**

Coalition's Day at the Legislature - Special thanks again to Teresa Johnson Troup with the NC Adult Day Services Association and the members of the Committee that planned the Day (Julie Wiggins, Bill Lamb, Kay Castillo, Karen Brewer, Amanda Borer, France Messer, and Mary Bethel) for all they did to help make the Day a big success. As we have continued to make rounds at the legislature these last several weeks, we are still hearing very positive comments about our Day's activities and the visits that were made with legislators and legislative staff. Several of those offering comments have noted that they were surprised by the demographic data about the growth in the state's older population. Thanks again to everyone (many of whom are pictured below) who came on April 4 to help spread the Coalition's message on our priorities.



Pace in Legislature Quickens – Activity in the NC General Assembly has been at a brisk pace the last several weeks as the April 27 crossover date approaches. Crossover is a self-imposed deadline which is the point by which bills not dealing with spending or raising money must pass one chamber or the other in order to remain eligible for consideration. There have been over 1500 bills introduced this legislative session, with many of the bills being introduced in the last several weeks. Legislators have been on a week-long Easter recess (April 12-18) so when they return on April 19, expect a frenzy of activity. It is also anticipated that the Senate will unveil its budget plan in the next several weeks which will add another dynamic to the mix. To see a complete list of bills introduced this session, click [here](#).

Aging Related Legislation – In addition to House Bill 248 mentioned earlier, there have been a number of bills related to aging introduced this legislative session. Mary Edwards with the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services has developed a bill tracker of key aging related bills. A copy of the tracker which lists bills introduced through the week ending April 13, 2017 is attached to this *Update*. One bill not on the list is [House Bill 633](#), Small Business Retirement Program. This bill, which is championed by AARP NC, sets up a voluntary retirement program for small businesses to participate in which allows employees to have direct payroll deduction into their IRAs. The aim of the program is to provide a mechanism for employees to save more for their retirement.

Medicaid Expansion Bill Introduced – As announced last week, House Bill 662 (Carolina Cares) which would expand Medicaid health-insurance coverage in the state to more adults has been introduced by Reps. Josh Dobson, Donny Lambeth (former hospital administrator, Greg Murphy (doctor), and Donna White (nurse). A press conference about the bill was held on April 11. An [article](#) by NC Health News provides a good overview of that. Bill provisions stipulate that in most cases, adults would have to be working or “engaged in activities that promote employment” to be eligible for coverage. Adults whose income are at or below 133% of the federal poverty level (less than \$16,000 for a single person) would qualify, and they would have to pay annual premiums equal to 2% of their household income, with some hardship exemptions. The bill sponsors are not calling this increase in coverage a Medicaid expansion, but an opportunity for the working poor to buy their insurance at a reduced cost. The [NC Institute of Medicine](#) estimates that 375,000 uninsured adults in the state would be eligible for coverage under the proposal. The Bill has been referred to the House Committee on Health Care Reform. Rep. Lambeth is a co-chair of this Committee.

In other news about Medicaid expansion, the U.S. Justice Department has asked a federal judge to dismiss the lawsuit filed by NC legislative leaders who challenged Governor Roy Cooper’s attempt to expand Medicaid. The Justice Department officials contend that legislative leaders asked a judge to intervene in the case before they had a valid claim (lawsuit filed before Cooper submitted his plan and before federal officials received, reviewed, or approved Cooper’s plan). State health officials have also asked that the lawsuit be dismissed.

NC Retirement Reform Bill Introduced – [Senate Bill 467](#) which was introduced the end of March by Senators Andy Wells, Bill Rabon, and Ron Rabin would make dramatic changes in the benefits offered to future state employees. The Bill provisions stipulate that state workers hired after July 2018 would not be eligible for enrollment in the state health insurance plan when they retire and most new workers would not be eligible for state pensions, but would be offered the option of enrolling in 401(k) plans. The State Employees Association of NC and the NC Retired Governmental Employees Association, both Coalition on Aging members, note that ending these benefits would hurt job recruitment as many employees work for the state at below-market wages because they will receive a pension and health insurance benefits in retirement. Senate Bill 467 has been referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee on Pensions, Compensation, and Benefits.

House Passes Deaf Driver's License Bill – The House has passed [House Bill 84](#) which would, at an individual's voluntary request, add a designation to his or her driver's license that he or she is deaf or hard of hearing. The designation would also be added to the registration information of any vehicle in that owner's name. This measure would help law enforcement identify people who are deaf and hard of hearing. The bill has been referred to the Senate Rules Committee.

Bill Passes to Shrink Court of Appeals – [House Bill 239](#) which would reduce the state Court of Appeals from 15 judges to 12 judges has been passed by the General Assembly and has been sent to Governor Cooper. The legislation is not supported by the Governor.

Newest Legislator Appointed – Durham County District Court Judge [Marcia Morey](#) was appointed on April 5 to fill the state House seat for District 30 (Durham) which had been held for many years by Rep. Paul Luebke who died in October of lymphoma. The seat was temporarily held by Rep. Phil Lehman while the process of selecting a replacement was completed. Rep. Morey served on the bench for nearly 18 years. She was viewed as the driving force behind Durham County's misdemeanor diversion program which gives 16 and 17 year olds charged with certain misdemeanors a second chance.

Senior House Democrat Won't Seek Re-Election – [Rep. Larry Bell](#) (District 21 - Sampson, Duplin, and Wayne) who has served in the General Assembly since 2001 has announced that he will not seek re-election when his term ends next year. He is a retired teacher and school administrator and chaired the House Education Committee before Republicans took control of the legislature.

Congress on Break – Congress is on recess until April 24. When Congress comes back in session, it will be working to finalize the FY17 funding. The Trump Administration is requesting supplemental funding, particularly for defense spending and to start work on a border wall. To offset these costs, the Administration is expected to propose \$18 billion in cuts to non-defense spending. We have reported in previous *Updates* about cuts of particular interest to aging advocates that may be on the chopping block.

Congressional Recess Calendar for Rest of 2017 – The Congressional calendar for the rest of the year calls for additional breaks as follows: May 5-15 (House only), May 26-June 5, July 1-10, July 29-Sept. 4, Sept. 15-20 (House only), Sept. 21-24 (both chambers), Oct. 6-9 (House), Oct. 9-15 (Senate), Oct. 14-22 (House), Nov. 17-27, and Dec. 15-31. When Congress is in recess, most members of our state’s Congressional delegation return home to North Carolina to connect with their constituents. This is a great time to set up a meeting at their local office, attend scheduled town hall meetings, invite them to an event or site visit, or to find other ways to personally deliver the message about issues facing older adults in your area.

What’s Next for ACA? Several media outlets are reporting that President Donald Trump is now saying that he is determined to resurrect the health care bill even if it means delaying tax overhaul. Last month after the US House of Representatives failed to pass a plan to repeal and replace Obamacare, the President said that he was prepared to put the defeat of the bill behind him and move on to the next challenge, rewriting the tax code. To read more about this and to keep updated on developments related to health news, including the health care law, check out [*Kaiser Health News*](#).

Wake Resources for Seniors Honored – The National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities’ (NASUAD) National Information and Referral Support Center has announced the award winners for the Technology in Practice: Contest to Identify Promising Practices in the Use of Technology in Aging and Disability I&R/A Programs. Resources for Seniors, a Coalition on Aging member and an Aging and Disability Resource Center serving older adults and people with disabilities in Wake County, was selected for the first place award. Resources for Seniors’ innovation partnership with the NC State University Department of Computer Engineering enabled the organization to cost-effectively design a mobile responsive website and provide better access to resource information in its database, including through a consumer-friendly personal cart system. Way to go Resources for Seniors!

NC Association on Aging Announces Award Winners- On March 17 as a part of the annual NC Association on Aging Conference, the Association presented its Excellence in Aging Awards: Congratulations to the following Award recipients:

- Service Excellence Award – Lucy Fletcher, Davidson County Senior Services
- Guiding Star Award – Suzanne LaFollette Black, AARP NC
- Rising Star Award – Laura Bolton Plunkett, Piedmont Triad Regional Council Area Agency on Aging
- Leadership Excellence Award – Thessia Everhart-Roberts, Davidson County Senior Services
- Reaching for the Stars Innovation Program Award – “Aging with Purpose,” Senior Services, Inc. of Forsyth

Rural-Urban Divide Grows – A new analysis of health statistics compiled by the University of Wisconsin’s Population Health Institute for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation shows there is still a divide between rural and urban health outcomes in North Carolina. The healthiest North Carolina counties are Wake, Orange, and Union and the counties with the worst outcomes are Edgecombe, Scotland, and Robeson. Socio-economic drivers and access to health care are the biggest factors in the deepening divide between urban and rural areas.

Cost of Growing Old in America – The Elder Economic Security Index offers a tool to increase understanding of what the true cost of growing old in America is. The Elder Index presents local expenses, savings requirements, and what incomes are needed to achieve economic success by family type and at the city, county, and state levels. The Elder Index was developed by the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston with Wider Opportunities for Women. It is currently maintained through a partnership between the Gerontology Institute and the National Council on Aging (NCOA). The Elder Index, which is a measure of the income that older adults need to meet their basic needs and to age in place with dignity, is specific to household size, location, housing, and health status. NCOA will present a webinar with UMass Boston on April 26, 2017, about the Index and how to use it. To find out more information about the Elder Index and to register for the webinar, click [here](#).

Grant Opportunities from Administration for Community Living/Administration on Aging - Funding opportunity announcements are now available for grants to support the implementation and sustainability of [Chronic Disease Self-Management Education](#) (deadline May 12) and [falls prevention programs](#) (deadline May 13).

Resource to Help Combat Malnutrition Among Older Adults – NCOA, along with several partners, has developed a new Community Malnutrition Resource Hub to help local organizations combat malnutrition among older adults. The Resource Hub includes practical resources, tools, and ideas for how to develop and implement a malnutrition plan in your community. To find out more, click [here](#).

Brief Notes and Updates:

- The board of trustees for the **State Health Plan** has approved a 2018 benefit design change that **imposes a \$50 monthly premium** for non-Medicare retirees enrolled in the 80/20 plan. The monthly premium is currently \$15.04.
- Eighty-one **older adults** across North Carolina **who were scammed** by two former insurance agents (Milton Hooks and James Mangum) have been refunded more than \$11 million as the result of a seven-year investigation by the NC Department of Insurance.

- Secretary of NC Department of Health and Human Services Mandy Cohen has appointed **Michael A. Becketts** as her **Assistant Secretary of Human Services**. Becketts who was the director of the Durham County Department of Social Services will oversee the Division of Social Services and the Division of Aging and Adult Services.
- An additional 13 people **died from the flu** last week in the state, raising the death toll for the 2016-17 flu season to 170.
- Best wishes to **Carolina Farmer**, Deputy Director of the Victims and Citizens Section in the NC Attorney General's Office, who has left this position and is the new **Executive Director of NC AmeriCorps**. She was very active in efforts to combat elder fraud in the state.
- To help protect Medicare recipients from identity theft, the Social Security Administration is beginning the process of issuing **Medicare cards that no longer display a cardholders' Social Security number**.
- The **Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program** in the NC Department of Insurance has **moved to the newly renovated Albemarle Building** at 325 N. Salisbury St. in Raleigh.
- The U.S. Census Bureau has released its latest population estimates for North Carolina which covers county and metro areas from mid-2015 to mid-2016. Data shows that well over half of **North Carolina's counties had more deaths than births last year**. Rebecca Tippet, Director of the Carolina Demography at UNC Chapel Hill notes that this pattern is not because mortality is high or health conditions are bad, but because we have so many seniors. Tippet said "population age is no longer looming, population aging is here."
- Hospital patients experienced more than 3 million **fewer hospital-acquired conditions** from 2010 through 2015, the result of a 21 percent decline in the rate of these adverse events over that period. Learn more about this from a [report](#) by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.
- Congratulations to **Nicholle Karin**, Public Policy Director and Lobbyist for the National Alliance for Mental Illness-North Carolina (NAMI-NC) for being selected as the 2017

National Association of Social Workers – North Carolina (NASW-NC) Myrna Miller Wellons Advocate of the Year Award recipient.

- A new [Pew Research Center study](#) reports that **23% of Americans** say there has been a time when they **took leave from work to care for a family member** with a serious health condition.
- According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, among seniors with Medicare and additional public coverage such as Medicaid, inflation-adjusted **out-of-pocket payments for medical care decreased** from an average of \$1,253 in 2000 to \$427 in 2014. Click [here](#) for more details.
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has proposed **delaying the implementation date for the new home health Conditions of Participation** which govern how home health agencies qualify to participate in Medicare and Medicaid until January 13, 2018 (the original effective date was July 13, 2017). Read more on this [here](#).
- The AARP Public Policy Institute has released [No Wrong Door: Person and Family-Centered Practices in Long-Term Services and Supports and a Checklist](#).
- The Alzheimer’s Disease Education and Referral Center, a service of the National Institute on Aging, has produced a booklet entitled [Home Safety for People with Alzheimer’s](#) which provides information about making homes safe room by room.
- To better predict, study, and diagnose small vessel disease in the brain and its role in vascular contributions to cognitive impairment and dementia (VCID), the National Institutes of Health has launched MarkVCID, a consortium designed to accelerate the development of new and existing biomarkers for small vessel VCID. Learn more [here](#).

Upcoming Meetings/Events – Springtime is a popular time for meetings and events across the state. Check out the following Coalition members’ activities that will be taking place in the next month.

April 21, 2017 – **NC Eldercare Workforce Coalition Meeting** at LeadingAge NC (222 N Person St.; NC Medical Society Building) in Raleigh. Meeting will focus on “Lessons Learned” from past programs in NC (Bob Konrad will share his insights) and working to set outcome goals for the year. For information contact Amanda Borer at nceldercareworkforce@gmail.com.

April 24, 2017 – **Care4Carolina Meeting** at the American Heart Association’s Office (3131 RDU Center, Suite 100) in Morrisville – 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. For information contact Carla Obiol at carla.obiol@heart.org.

April 28, 2017 – **25th Anniversary of the Center for Volunteer Caregiving** at NC State University Club (4200 Hillsborough St.) in Raleigh – 6:30 to 10:00 p.m. Click [here](#) for more information.

May 3-4, 2017 – **The Carolinas Center Caring Conference** (“Thinking Outside the Box to Meet Diverse Needs of Patients and Families”) at the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly in Black Mountain. Click [here](#) for more information.

May 4-5, 2017 – **4th Annual NC PACE Association Statewide Conference** (Setting the PACE 2017: Here We Grow!) at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel and Convention Center in Durham. Click [here](#) for more information.

May 15-18, 2017 - **LeadingAge NC 61st Annual Trade Show and Conference** at the Pinehurst Resort in Pinehurst.. Click [here](#) for more information.

May 17, 2017 – **NC Partnership to Address Adult Abuse 2017 Annual Meeting and Conference** at the NC Judicial Center (901 Corporate Center Drive) in Raleigh – 9:00 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Click [here](#) for more information.

Aging Programs on NPR – NPR had had a number of reports on aging issues in the last month. To view a program, click on it. Programs include:

- [U.S. Health Care Wrestles With The 'Pre-Existing Condition'](#)
- [Federal Task Force Softens Opposition To Routine Prostate Cancer Screening](#)
- [Republicans Now Control Obamacare. Will Your Coverage Change?](#)
- [Limits In GOP Plan Could Shrink Seniors' Long-Term Health Benefits](#)
- [Could Meals On Wheels Really Lose Funding? Yes, But It's Hard To Say How Much](#)
- [Cancer Drug That Might Slow Parkinson's, Alzheimer's Headed For Bigger Tests](#)
- [Trump, Democrats Look For Common Ground On Drug Prices](#)

Additional Articles/Resources:

NBC News – March 11, 2017 - [No Longer the ‘Evil Weed’? Some Seniors See Marijuana’s Benefit](#)

US News and World Report – March 16, 2017 – [Falls Are Taking a Huge and Rising Toll on Elderly Brains](#)

Pacific Standard – March 29, 2017 – [The Trump Administration is Pretending Older LGBTQ Americans Don't Exist](#) (HHS is looking to erase LGBTQ seniors from an annual survey that determines services for older Americans)

The New York Times – April 7, 2017 – [Hey Hey, My Way – Aging Rock Fans Still Hold Their Lighters High](#)

The New York Times – April 10, 2017 – [The Patients Were Saved – That's Why the Families are Suing](#)

North Carolina Public Radio – April 13, 2017- [Black Retirees: North Carolina 'Reverse' Migration](#)

The Hill - April 17, 2017 – [Technology is Becoming a Fountain of Youth for the Aging Consumer](#)

The New York Times – April 17, 2017 – [Declaring War on Financial Abuse of Older People](#)

North Carolina Public Radio – April 18, 2017 – [Triangle Hospitals Get Strong Safety Scores](#)

The Huffington Post – April 18, 2017 – [Is Aging at Home Really the Answer When You Consider Its Hidden Costs?](#)

DHHS Secretary Coming to April Coalition Meeting – We are honored that Dr. Mandy Cohen, new Secretary of the NC Department of Health and Human Services, will attend the April meeting of the Coalition on Aging. Secretary Cohen will share remarks and engage in a Question and Answer session. The meeting will be on April 28 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (see the information below on meeting location). The meeting will last a bit longer than usual as Secretary Cohen has a prior engagement that morning and will arrive about 11:30 a.m. Extending the meeting until 12:30 p.m. will allow additional time for dialogue with her. Additional items on the agenda include a debriefing of the Day at the Legislature, a review of developments related to relevant legislation, and updates from Coalition members.

Change in Location for Coalition Meetings – Don't forget that the monthly meetings of the Coalition on Aging are now being held in room 104 of the Brown Building which is located at 801 Biggs Drive on the Dix Campus. This is the hearing room for the NC Division of Health Service Regulation. The Brown Building is the third building on the right if you enter the Campus off of Goode Drive from Lake Wheeler Road. It is yellowish in color and has a large ramp in front of the building. Room 104 has an outside entrance on the left side of the building. Handicap parking is available in the lot adjacent to the building and handicap accessibility to the building is available via the front door using the ramp. Free parking is available on the street in

front of the building or in the lot across the street. Click [here](#) to get directions and a map to the building. The Brown Building is number 17 on the map

Submitting Information for Updates – If you have news or information on activities and events you would like to have included in an *Update* to Coalition members, please send details to Mary Bethel, Coalition President, at mmbethel72@gmail.com. The Coalition also posts a master calendar of aging related events and activities on the Coalition’s website.

Have questions about the Coalition on Aging or need more information, including information about joining the Coalition or renewing membership, please contact us at mmbethel72@gmail.com or check out our website at <http://www.nccoalitiononaging.org/>.

