

Statement from NC Coalition on Aging on Senate Budget Proposal

May 10, 2017

Senate Budget Proposal Falls Short in Addressing Needs of Older Adults

It appears that the Senate budget proposal released yesterday did little to address priority issues identified by the [NC Coalition on Aging](#), a membership organization that has brought together 56 aging related consumer, provider, and advocacy organizations in the state to collectively advocate for the needs of our state's older citizens.

Only \$969,549 in non-recurring funding is appropriated for the Home and Community Care Block Grant, a Coalition priority, which is the primary funding source for non-Medicaid funded services to help older adults remain independent and living in the community. This continues existing non-recurring Block Grant funding that would have terminated at the end of the fiscal year without General Assembly action. There is no new additional funding for the Block Grant to address the waiting list of 10,000 people, many of whom need home-delivered meals and in-home aid services.

There is also no new funding proposed in the budget for adult protective services (APS) or guardianship services, another Coalition priority. APS reports have increased 52% over the past seven years and the need for publically funded guardians has more than doubled over the past decade. Many counties struggle to adequately staff and fund these services.

Mary Bethel, President of the Coalition on Aging, notes that she was surprised that the Senate budget plan contained no new funding for adult protective services and guardianship as well as the Block Grant. "I thought we did a good job of communicating with Senate members about the critical need for funds to support these programs and was surprised that so little was in the budget for aging services. I went over the budget twice because I thought I had just missed seeing the funding listed, but it was not there" said Bethel. She points out that the need for services for older adults continues to grow as the population of seniors increases. Today, 1 in 5 – over 2 million people in the state – are age 60 and over. By 2018, next year, there will be more people in the state over the age of 60 than there will be under 18. One of the fastest growing cohorts of the aging population is those 85 and over who are most likely to need services like those noted above.

Bethel did point out that the Coalition is pleased that the Senate budget does provide an increase in the reimbursement rate for Medicaid personal care services, another Coalition priority, to an effective hourly rate of \$15.76 from an effective rate of \$15.52 per hour for services occurring after December 31, 2017. The proposed budget also provides additional funding on a temporary basis for facilities that serve recipients of State-County Special Assistance. The amount of the temporary addition is \$34 per month for each resident of a facility who is a recipient of State-County Special Assistance.

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