



**NC Coalition on Aging Members' Meeting**  
**December 6, 2024 via ZOOM**

**64 Attendees**

**Board Chair Mary Bethel** opened the meeting at 10:03 a.m.

**Lee Dobson, Treasurer's report** was approved unanimously.

- NCCOA is on target with its fiscal year spending.
- No unusual debits have occurred this quarter. The end of the year is when many of our annual expenses are due, such as NetworkForGood, Website hosting, etc.
- NCCOA is in its membership renewals period, and we encourage organizations and individuals to [renew](#) their membership for 2025.

**Update Report by Trish Farnham, Project Director**

- **NC Institute of Medicine (IOM)** hosted its 41<sup>st</sup> annual meeting on November 21, 2024, at the McKimmon Center in Raleigh. The focus of the meeting was [Long-Term Services and Supports: Policy Solutions for a Changing Landscape](#). The unifying thread was healthcare workforce. Expert panelists – including several NCCOA board and members - provide a deep dive into the most pressing challenges. NCIOM reports the key takeaways as:
  - Direct care work is a more than \$1 billion industry, but many direct care workers struggle to make ends meet.
  - Workforce training and support are needed to improve sustainability in all parts of the industry.
  - Respite is vital to avoid burnout among unpaid and/or family caregivers.

Family caregivers, health care and human services providers, policymakers, and researchers need to work together to examine the need for *innovative, forward-thinking policy solutions for our rapidly changing state*. There is more work to be done; it was refreshing to see the industry has come together to address the needs of older adults by focusing on workforce.

- **Mercer Workforce Report:** The direct care worker (DCW) shortages continue to impact access to care. By 2028, [Mercer expects a projected deficit of over 73,000 nursing assistants nationwide.](#) [source: <https://www.mercer.com/en-us/about/newsroom/future-of-the-us-healthcare-industry-labor-market-projections-by-2028/>]
- **Continued Dialogue with DHB and DMHDDSUS:** On December 5, 2024, Essential Job/Essential Care met with Jay Ludlam, Director of Division of Health Benefits and Kellie

Crosbie, Director of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services and their leadership teams to discuss Governor’s transition plans, Medicaid rebase shortfall, and legislative priorities for 2025. We are grateful for their willingness to share their insights and commitment to stabilize, strength, and streamline our healthcare workforce that supports vulnerable and older adults.

- **[NC Center on the Workforce for Health](#)**, led by Andy McCracken, is working to determine the best way to build and sustain a quality workforce. They plan to host caregiver workshops. Please contact Trish for more information. [source: <https://workforceforhealth.org/>]
- **Medical Care Advisory Committee (MCAC)** is a federally required advisory committee. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS) has instructed Medicaid to re-structure the MCAC to elevate the voices of individuals with lived experience. Therefore, Medicaid is currently recruiting for two separate committees – [Medicaid Advisory Committee \(MAC\)](#) and [Beneficiary Advisory Committee \(BAC\)](#). These two committees will provide insight to Medicaid leadership on diverse topics, including additions and changes to covered services, coordination of care, quality of services, eligibility, enrollment and renewal processes, access to services, etc. The Deputy Secretary of Medicaid will select members. Interested individuals should apply for consideration. [source: <https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/meetings-notice/committees-and-work-groups/nc-medicare-advisory-committee-and-medicare-beneficiary-advisory-council-macbac>]
- **Comprehensive Rate and Wage Analysis:** As previously reported the NC Center for Workforce for Health continues to move forward with securing the DHHC contract to conduct a comprehensive rate and wage analysis focused on LTSS and HCBS. Trish has led EJEC, and NCCOA members have been involved. We’re hopeful for an official announcement next meeting.

## **SPEAKER PRESENTATION**

**The 2024 Elections and Implications for N.C. and National Politics** by Dr. David McLennan, Professor of Political Science at Meredith College and Director of the [Meredith Poll](#). He examined North Carolina voter attitudes on the election. It was an excellent presentation on voter turnout, what we can expect from this new Trump Administration, and its implications on policies.

- Voter turnout in the Piedmont and NC western mountains counties was high, especially supporting Trump.
- Lower than needed turnout supporting Harris in traditionally democratic counties, especially in Wake and Mecklenburg.

- Strong Trump counties had a higher turnout and, he got an increase in traditionally democratic counties, especially Mecklenburg (6300) and Wake (8600) than in 2020.
- Counties south of I-95, under performed for Harris.

Slides from Dr. McLennan presentation can be found [here](#).

**Member Spotlight** –[Solace Health](#) is a NCCOA member and partner. Dylan Bondy, Head of Outreach, shared that Solace Health focuses on empowering individuals and families to improve health outcomes through navigating collaboration within the health system. This integrated navigation and support service is covered by Medicare and Medicare Advantage. Learn more by connecting directly with Solace Health for more information:

[\[https://www.solace.health/\]](https://www.solace.health/).

Slides from Dylan’s presentation can be found [here](#).

#### **Update Report by Board Chair Mary Bethel**

- **Media Coverage** – NCCOA has been interviewed numerous times to answer questions related to the impact of the election on aging issues; Multi-sector Plan on Aging; funding needs for counties experiencing waitlist, etc.
- [NC Multi-sector Plan on Aging](#) is shifting from planning to implementation. Please watch for volunteer opportunity. MSPA will need stakeholder involvement to operationalize this ambitious and important plan. [\[source: https://www.ncdhhs.gov/imstillhere\]](https://www.ncdhhs.gov/imstillhere)
- The Board expects to make an offer for a new **executive director** in the very near future.
- Hurricane Helene Relief continues. NCCOA continues to promote donation opportunities for the Hurricane Relief Fund that was established by the Coalition, the NC Association on Aging and the NC Association of Area Agencies on Aging. The retired accountant who completed NCCOA’s 990s was impacted by Hurricane Helene. His house and cars tragically were flooded. NCCOA made a small contribution to him.
- NCCOA is looking for someone to do the 990s, due in April of each year. Please send any recommendations to the Board.
- Legislative Session starts in January 2025. A few races remain preliminary. North Carolina will continue to be divided with a Republican-controlled General Assembly and a Democrat-controlled Executive Branch.

- **Medicaid Expansion** estimated that 600,000 over two years would register under expansion for health care coverage. Last week Governor Cooper announced that at the end of 1 year, almost 600,000 North Carolinians have signed up.

### **Policy/Legislative Committee Report by Kay Castillo, Committee Chair**

[Draft 2025 Legislative and Public Priorities](#) was presented. The issues do not represent the entirety of the issues which the Coalition supports and on which it will take a position.

- Securing support for the reestablishment of a Study Commission on Aging is a significant catalyst for getting other priorities accomplished.
- The priorities align with the recommendations from the Multi-section Plan on Aging and collaboration with other stakeholders. We are not a ‘Lone Ranger.’ We will build upon the momentum and work collaboratively with our partners.
- Several members recommended that workforce and waitlists should be at the top.
  - Waitlist – Mary suggested discussions around consistent data on waitlist for the various programs is needed to be able to better message to lawmakers as not all services, programs, etc. show waitlist, or data is not available.
- Workforce is extremely important and critical to supporting older adults. Many organizations have legislative agendas that have specific budget asks. NCCOA will support those workforce issues. NCCOA’s language to be broad, but we expect the conversations to be specific.

### **Health Equity Committee Report by Rosalie Calarco, Committee Co-chair**

- Kylie Foley with the Institute of Emerging Issues will be presenting on Statewide Digital Equity at the committee’s next meeting, scheduled for January 10 at 10 am.

### **Sharing from Coalition Members**

- **NC Justice Center:** Bidding farewell to Ana Pardo, NC Justice Center, as this is her last meeting. We thank her for her years of service and dedication. You will be missed!
- **Social Security:** Lisa Wallace reminded that in-person services are by appointment only and requires a two-step process. <https://www.ssa.gov/news/newsletter/>. Exceptions are made for people experiencing homelessness: <https://blog.ssa.gov/helpful-social-security-resources-for-people-experiencing-homelessness/>
- **NC Association of Aging:** Janice Tyler shared that NCAOA is hosting their State Aging Conference for aging service providers, students, and others interested in aging on February 25-26, 2025, at the Carolina Inn, Chapel Hill. Mark your calendar and plan to attend. [Source: <https://www.ncaoaging.org/conference-trainings>]

**Upcoming NCCOA Meetings**

- Health Equity Committee, Friday, January 10, 2024 - 10:00 am - 11:00 am
- January Membership Meeting, Friday, January 24, 2024, 10:00 am - 12:00 noon

Respectfully submitted, Lee Dobson, Secretary/Treasurer