

# **May 7, 2025**

## **Aging Advocacy Day**

**AGING  
WELL IN  
NC?**

### **Aging Consumers, Providers and Advocates Coming Together to Ask for Legislative Support for Key Issues**

North Carolina, like the country as a whole, is experiencing an increase in the number of people over the age of 65. This year, there are 2 million people in the state 65+. Of this number, the age group accounting for the biggest percentage increase is the 85+. In seven years, the number of individuals 65 and older is expected to surpass the population under 18 years old.

This growth in the older adult population results in a need for programs, services and actions that will help support our older citizens as they age in communities across the state. The six issues that aging advocates are asking the General Assembly today to support were identified because they pertain to issues that were identified as legislative priorities in the Multisector Plan on Aging for the state that was released last year or they relate to programs for which critical funding is needed.

### **Priorities for Legislative Action**

#### **Pass NC Work & Save (H79, S110)**

- Nearly half of North Carolina's private sector workers don't have a retirement savings plan through their employer, making it harder to save for retirement.
- NC Work and Save legislation makes it easier for workers—especially those without employer retirement plans—to start saving through simple, automatic payroll deductions.
- A Work and Save program gives people control and peace of mind: The program is voluntary and portable, so savers keep their account even if they change jobs. It helps more people build financial security without costing employers anything and saves the state hundreds of millions in public assistance in the long run.

#### **Approve Property Tax Relief Study (H 432 passed House)**

- Many older adults and persons with disabilities in the state are finding it increasingly difficult to pay for rising property tax bills.
- This legislation advances studying targeted property tax relief solutions for seniors and disabled homeowners
- The study will look at ways to ease the property tax burden on older adults such as increasing the exclusion amount, increasing the income threshold, slowing down how much taxes can go up each year, offering more flexible ways to pay, and reducing the impact of rising home values. These measures aim to allow older adults and person with disabilities the ability to age in place.

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### **Continue State Funding for North Carolina Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (NC SHIIP)** (Funding not included in SB 257)

- SHIIP is the only organization in the state that provides unbiased, accurate, highly personalized one-on-one counseling about Medicare by phone and in-person in all 100 counties in North Carolina, all at no cost to the Consumer.
- In 2024, SHIIP counseled more than 69,000 Medicare beneficiaries, answered 24,000 calls from Medicare beneficiaries and processed 1,063 complaints including 16 legislative referrals. In addition to Medicare counseling, SHIIP provided beneficiary and provider complaint assistance for Medicare supplement insurance, long-term care insurance, and pharmaceutical assistance program application support.
- In 2024 SHIIP helped North Carolina Medicare beneficiaries save \$53 million: \$36 million through cost saving enrollments and federal financial assistance program application submissions and \$17 million through recovered benefits from complaints and medication assistance program assistance.

### **Fully Fund the Medicaid Rebase**

- Over 500,000 older adults and persons with disabilities rely on Medicaid, including those who need home-based care and long-term care services and supports.
- We ask the General Assembly to work with the NC Division of Health Benefits to adequately and fully fund the Medicaid rebase (projected cost) to ensure that older and disabled adults can continue to receive needed Medicaid benefits uninterrupted.

### **Provide Funding for NC Senior Games** (Funding not included in SB 257)

- NC Senior Games, the largest program of its kind in the country, provides year-round health promotion and wellness education activities for adults 50 and older through 54 Local Games that serve all 100 counties.
- Program participants actively pursue "healthy aging" in year-round programs that keep them physically active and socially engaged.
- State funding has supported Senior Games for many years and has enabled the program to leverage resources (\$2.29 million in 2022-2023) from local partners, corporate sponsorships, and individual contributions.

### **Strengthening Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program** (HB 513 and SB 362)

- Long-Term Care Ombudsmen are state-trained, certified individuals who advocate for and serve North Carolinians living in long-term care (LTC) facilities.
- National standards recommend one full-time paid Ombudsman per every 2,000 long-term care beds. NC has approximately 92,500 long-term care beds and needs roughly ten more long-term care ombudsmen to fill the need.
- In 2023, Ombudsman closed 2,860 complaints in NC and provided 6,161 instances of technical assistance to individuals regarding long-term care issues.