



NC Coalition on Aging Members' Meeting Minutes April 25, 2025, via ZOOM

50 Attendees

Executive Director Sandra Phelps opened the meeting by welcoming everyone at 10:02 a.m.

Lee Dobson, Secretary/Treasurer's Report

- Ended Q1-2025 in a favorable financial position. On target and within plan. No unusual expenses.
- We received the second year of funding from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation for our direct care workers initiative and caregiver project, led by Trish Farnham.
- We received sponsorship payment from United HealthCare. We appreciate their continued support.
- The board will explore possible modifications to the sponsorship levels for next year.
- NCCOA is in its membership renewals period, and we encourage organizations and individuals to renew their membership for 2025. If you need an invoice, please contact Sandra Phelps.

Guest speakers **Divya Venkataganesan, MPH**, Section Chief-Planning, Division of Aging, NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and **Caylee Weaver, Planner/Evaluator**, also with the Division of Aging. They provided updates on the *All Ages, All Stages* – NC's Multi-Sector Plan for Aging as it moves into the implementation phase. The plan is community-driven and rooted in the lived experiences and local innovations of the state. The plan is comprised of five key workgroups: Supporting Older Adults and Their Families, Strengthening Communities for a Lifetime, Optimizing Health and Well-Being, Affording Aging, and Legislative Action. In total, the plan encompasses 11 distinct focus areas: 7 internally coordinated subgroups operating within these five workgroups, and 4 externally housed initiatives that align with and contribute to the broader vision of the plan. The plan will also have a data dashboard to track progress and inform decision-making. The implementation phase of the plan will begin in May and June, with subgroup meetings and quarterly public webinars. The plan is a roadmap for aging transformation. Information about the plan can be found at <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/imstillhere>.

Coalition Updates

Direct Care Workforce Initiative-ZSR/WECARE Updates – Trish Farnham, Project Coordinator

- Trish provided an update on NCCOA's federal Medicaid advocacy efforts, highlighting both the recent advocacy flyer that has been developed and underscoring the importance of the more technical content about provider taxes and federal match rates.
- She noted that a group of NCCOA partners recently met with staff from the office of Rep. Richard Hudson who serves on the U.S. House's Energy and Commerce Committee which has jurisdiction over Medicaid. The meeting reinforced the importance of advocating for continuing the current funding streams that support the NC Medicaid program, including the provider tax and the current federal match rates.
- She noted the current proposed cuts information released through the Office of Management and Budget that impacts NCCOA aging and disability partners and invited NCCOA members to provide additional information directly to meeting attendees.
- Trish then provided updates on state Medicaid activities, noting that DHHS has recently released a policy paper inviting input on the Department's potential direction to include dually eligible beneficiaries in Medicaid Managed Care. The deadline for submitting comments is May 7. NCCOA will be submitting comments. Trish invited NCCOA members to submit any feedback they would like NCCOA to integrate by April 30.
- Finally, Trish noted that the Center on the Workforce for Health has concluded its four-part workshop series on the direct care workforce and was currently working with NC DHHS to develop opportunities to share the insights gathered and set a path forward.

Policy Committee Report by Sandra Phelps in the absence of Kay Castillo, Committee Chair

- [2025 Legislative Priorities](#) are posted on the website.
- Aging Advocacy Day is scheduled for May 7th. It is a two-part event: morning at the NC General Assembly meeting with legislators and their staff and afternoon at the NC Farmer's Market for an Older American's Month celebration.
 - The morning advocacy event is co-hosted by AARP North Carolina, NC Coalition on Aging, and Friends for Residents in Long Term Care and provides the opportunity to advocate on aging issues. Coalition members were encouraged to register for this.
 - The afternoon celebration at the NC Farmer's Market as part of Older American's Month observance is co-hosted with the NC Senior Games, AARP North Carolina, NCDHHS, NCCOA and The State's Farmers Market. There will be live entertainment, guest speakers, activities and more. Help *Flip the Script on Aging!* is the theme for Older Americans Month this year.
- Sandra and Trish provided an update on bills related to aging, including pending bills pertaining to property tax relief for low-income older adults and persons with disabilities, and the possible bill to establish a Study Commission on Aging, yet to be introduced.
- In the meeting, Trish emphasized the importance of staying informed about state and national developments affecting the aging population. She highlighted the proposed cuts in Medicaid funding and encouraged partners to reach out to their representatives. Trish also stressed the

need for collaboration among different organizations and the importance of not pitting different groups against each other.

- The following information about state budget developments and bills pending in the state legislature were shared by Lee Dobson and others:
 - Senate released and passed their 2025-2027 Appropriation bill, S257. It calls for \$32.6B and \$33.3B in respective years.
 - The House and Senate leadership have agreed on spending limits of \$800M and \$700M in the respective years. House is preparing their budget next.
 - Melinda from NC SHIP shared with the group that their state funding is proposed to be eliminated in the Senate budget, which would have a devastating impact on their program
 - The Senate's budget included:
 - 700M for Hurricane Helen Relief.
 - Increases for teachers of 2.3% and 3.3% and \$3,000 one-time bonuses over two years.
 - Increases for state employees of 1.25% and \$3,000 one-time bonuses over two years.
 - Cuts personal income tax rate to 3.49% in 2027 and 2.99% in 2028.
 - \$3.8M Funding for DOA Block Grants and money
 - Rainy Day funding
 - Advanced Care Directives, H349
 - Introduced by Reps. Huneycutt, Potts, Cunningham
 - Introduced on 3-10; Passed 112/0 on 4-15; Sent to Senate
 - Project C.A.R.E., H120
 - Introduced by Reps. Moss, Setzer, Haney
 - Introduced on 2-13; Referred to Appropriations
 - Work & Save, S110/H79
 - Spearheaded by AARP - would help people to save for retirement.
 - Medicaid HCBS (PDN, PCS) Rate Increases, H453/S366
 - These are placeholder bills as funding would need to be included in the budget.
 - Medicaid DPS Increase, S 239
 - This is placeholders' bill as funding would need to be included in the budget.
 - APRN Definition, S537/H514

Health Equity Committee Report by Dr. Deryl Davis Fulmer and Rosalie Calarco, Co-Chairs

- The Committee Co-chairs provided an update of their activities. It includes re-wording the equity mission statement for the website, which will be updated by the end of the month. Each workgroup is moving forward with their current goals.

- The BIPOC committee continues to address the high use of tobacco products amongst older North Carolinians and is preparing for *No Menthol Sunday* on May 19.
- The Rural committee is focusing on telehealth and the digital divide in addition to revisiting its work on NC's direct care worker issues.
- The LGBTQ+ committee announced that the membership survey will go out in June, during Pride month, and stressed the importance of everyone submitting it this year. It will help with identifying where to focus efforts. The Committee continues to pursue partnerships with small non-profits, faith-based organizations, schools, etc., to continue to advance goals and identified needs.

Member Announcements

The meeting concluded with updates and announcements from Coalition members.

- Heather Altman with the NC Serious Illness Coalition will be presenting at a meeting of the General Statutes Commission on May 5 regarding the Advanced Care Planning bill and Uniform Healthcare Decisions Act. She seeks additional subject matter experts to participate with her.
- Kevin Robinson with NC SHIP provided information about the North Carolina Partnership to Address Adult Abuse conference that will be held on May 20, 2025, and updates on funding for the SHIP program.
- Dick Chady, past Secretary/Treasurer for the Coalition, encouraged members to advocate against potential cuts to Medicaid and Social Security by contacting their representatives.

Upcoming Membership Meetings (at 10:00 – 12:00):

- May 16, 2025 (Adjusted for Memorial Day weekend)
- June 27, 2025
- July – No meeting
- August 22, 2025
- September 26, 2025 - Annual Meeting, in-person at the Hilton Garden Inn in Raleigh

Meeting adjourned at 11:45 am.

Respectfully submitted, Lee Dobson, Secretary & Treasurer