



NC Coalition on Aging Members' Meeting Minutes

April 24, 2026, via ZOOM

46 Attendees

Mary Bethel, Board Chair, opened the meeting at 10:02 a.m. It was noted that ASL and CART Captioning services were available for the meeting.

Minutes from the March 27, 2026, meeting were posted on the Coalition's website and were sent with the meeting notice.

Financial Update – Sandra Phelps, Executive Director

Sandra reported on the Coalition's financial status noting slower revenue but also lower expenses in April, with four new individual members and one organization joining during the month. Members were encouraged to renew their memberships.

Coalition Updates/Announcements Provided by Sandra Phelps and Mary Bethel

- The Coalition will be on boarding the new Executive Director, Kay Castillo, who will start on May 4. Kay introduced herself and expressed enthusiasm about her new role.
- Mary announced her plans to begin to step back from her Coalition role (her tenure of Board Chair ends this year) due to personal commitments, particularly spending time with young grandchildren. She publicly thanked Sandra for her significant contributions to the Coalition.
- Sandra, in her new role as Operations Director, will have a new e-mail and phone number. These will be shared with members.
- The Coalition's Board met on April 13.
- The NC Association on Aging has announced that it will not hold a spring conference this year but will have one in March of 2027.
- The NC Center for Nonprofits held its annual meeting, and a survey by them revealed that the top issues for members are fundraising, marketing/communications, and advocacy.
- Lee Dobson, chair of the Public Policy Committee, reported that there will not be an Aging Advocacy Day this spring but the Coalition and AARP will host an educational event on May 12 at the General Assembly. The event is designed to help educate Coalition members about how the legislative process works. The Committee has adopted a framework for evaluating policy decisions and recommendations which was approved by the Coalition's Board of Directors at their April meeting. The Coalition's 2025 legislative priorities were carried forward to 2026. The Committee will develop priorities for the 2027 long legislative session with input from members.
- The Governor has released his proposed budget.
- The leadership of the General Assembly has announced that they have agreed to provide an additional \$319 million for the Medicaid rebase. They will also focus on rooting out Medicaid waste, fraud, and abuse.
- The Coalition is joining a new Keep NC Medicaid Strong Coalition.

- The House Select Committee on Property Tax Relief and Reform did not take up property tax relief for low-income older adults and persons with disabilities, but one of the Committee chairs did say that this is something the Committee may need to look at going forward.
- The Coalition’s monthly newsletter was sent out yesterday.
- The Governor’s Advisory Committee for a Stronger NC will have a listening session in Asheville at Asheville/Buncombe Tech on May 28.
- Maggie Woods who spoke at the August Coalition meeting about digital equity for older adults when she was Director of the NC Dept. of Information Technology’s Office of Digital Equity is the new Director of the NC Rural Health Transformation Program.
- Greg Daniels has been named as the new Deputy Director, NC Division of Health Benefits (Medicaid) Long Term Services and Supports.
- Melanie Bush has been named the new Deputy Secretary of Medicaid.
- A bill with bi-partisan support has been introduced in the General Assembly to increase the Medicaid dental rates in the state that are 34% of the commercial rate. Dental benefits currently account for 14% of Medicaid services and 2% of Medicaid funding.
- The NC Budget and Tax Center has released a report on economic factors in each county.
- President Trump has released his budget. It calls for the elimination of LIHEA, CSBG, and SCSEP (Title V).
- Katie Kutcher, a Coalition Board Member, was recognized for her promotion to Aging Program Director for the Centralina Area Agency on Aging.
- Mary Williams-Stover, a Coalition Board Member, was recognized for receiving the 2026 Justice and Equity Award from the American Society on Aging.
- The Health Equity Committee’s first “Hot Topic” Series presentation will be May 8 at 9:30 a.m. to celebrate Older Americans Month. Lindsey Golden, Territory Government Relations Director, Alzheimer’s Association, will present *“Building Healthy Brain Habits - Taking Care of Your Cognitive Health.”*

Membership Announcements

- Misty Piekaar-Williams with the Division of Aging shared upcoming presentations by NCDHHS Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Lawrence Greenblatt. He will speak on dementia on May 8 and on May 29 the topic will be cannabis use by older adults and its impact. More information will be posted on the DHHS website and in the Coalition’s upcoming calendar of events.
- Tara Muller announced that NC Disability Rights’ Conference will be held on May 6 at the Friday Center in Chapel Hill.
- Janice Tyler announced the Aging Bootcamp offered by the North Carolina Association on Aging (NCAOA) is scheduled for May 4. Also, applications are being accepted by NCAOA for their annual awards. The deadline for submitting is May 29.
- Deryl Davis Fulmer announced in chat that RGEA will host a session on Navigating Aging in Today’s World on May 20 at 12:30 p.m.
- Katie Kutcher shared that Centralina Area Agency on Aging has monthly webinars scheduled through August. Also, their Annual Aging Conference will be in Charlotte on October 16. Teepa Snow will be their speaker. Proposals for sessions are being accepted now.
- Sandra noted that the Calendar of Events distributed by the Coalition will be sent out on May 1.

**NCGA Legislative Short Session Developments and Federal Legislative Developments –
Chris Brandenburg, AARP-NC**

- The last legislative session was not very productive. Only 97 bills were passed. The Republican leadership could not get along. There were disagreements about several issues including the state income tax rate.
- There were March primary election upsets that could impact legislative dynamics including the Speaker Pro Tempore of the Senate and three moderate Democrats who sometimes voted with Republicans were defeated.
- The short legislative session began April 21. The top priority for the session is passing a state budget.
- Tax issues will also be on the agenda. Other important topics to be considered include:
 - Medicaid funding
 - Energy and data centers
 - Property tax relief (may be a constitutional amendment vote)
 - Potential veto overrides
 - Hurricane Helene relief funding
 - Involuntary commitment reforms
- 2027 NCGA legislative session insights:
 - Turnover in the General Assembly (maybe as high as 1/3)
 - Will there still be Republican super majority
 - Impact of change in leadership in the Senate
 - Impact of federal legislation including H.R.1
 - Importance of North Carolina Congressional Senate race
 - Will there be an opportunity to play more offense on issues than defense

PRESENTATION: NC SNAP and HR1 Impact – Jill Simmerman Lawrence, Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor – Opportunity and Well-Being, NC DHHS

- Federal changes will impact beneficiaries, state budgets, and county administrative costs.
- There are 1.4 million people on SNAP in our state.
- Key eligibility changes include work requirements expansion to 80 hours/month, non-citizen eligibility restrictions, and standard utility allowance modifications.
- Veterans and homeless are no longer exempt.
- There are significant funding shifts where the state and counties will now cover 75% of administrative costs while federal reimbursement drops to 25%. This starts October 1. This is expected to cost the state \$420 million annually.
- The state has three main work streams to address these changes:
 - Policy and training,
 - Technical assistance and quality improvement, and
 - Information technology updates.
- The discussion highlighted concerns about payment error rates and potential federal advocacy needs, including requests to delay benefit cost share requirements and preserve broad-based categorical eligibility.

No Additional Business Identified

Upcoming NCCOA Membership Meetings (from 10:00 – 12:00): May 15, 2026

Meeting adjourned at 12:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Sandra Phelps, Executive Director