NC Coalition on Aging Members' Meeting Minutes

May 15, 2026, via ZOOM

45 Attendees

**Mary Bethel, Board Chair,** opened the meeting at 10:01 a.m. It was noted that ASL and CART Captioning services were available for the meeting. Mary welcomed attendees, noting the collaboration with the North Carolina Serious Illness Coalition for their joint May meeting. Heather Altman with the Serious Illness Coalition also welcomed all attendees.

Kay Castillo was welcomed as the Coalition's new Executive Director. She started on May 4. She thanked Sandra Phelps who has transitioned to the Operations Director position for her support during this transition time.

Minutes from the April 24, 2026 meeting were posted on the Coalition's website and were sent with the meeting notice.

**Financial Update – Lee Little, Secretary/Treasurer**
Lee noted that the Coalition is in good financial state early in this fiscal year. Income is above budget through April 30 and expenses are slightly below budget.

**PRESENTATIONS:** (To hear these in-depth presentation, check out the recording of the meeting).

**Abby Carter Emanuelson - Executive Director, North Carolina Alliance for Health**

Abby discussed the work of her organization, including efforts around School Meals for All NC, Keeping North Carolina Medicaid Strong, and the Stronger with SNAP Coalition, particularly in response to HR1 and its implications for state funding of Medicaid and food assistance programs. Highlights of the presentation include details on these NC Alliance for Health priorities:

- FULLY FUND MEDICAID - Support measures that provide adequate funding for the program and all its requirements.
- SUSTAIN MEDICAID EXPANSION - Prevent enactment of the trigger law, support a stable and sustainable healthcare workforce, and ensure beneficiaries and providers have what they need for Medicaid to remain accessible and effective.
- FUND SNAP and PROTECT AND PRESERVE SNAP ACCESS - Ensure SNAP remains accessible to the 1.4 million North Carolinians who rely on it — primarily children, seniors, people with disabilities, and working families. North Carolina must invest more than $80 million in FY2026 to fully fund state and county SNAP administration. Oppose policies that reduce eligibility, increase administrative barriers, or cut benefits.

There is good news that the General Assembly has provided funding for the Medicaid rebase for 2025 through HB 696, however, there is concern that there are provisions in bill that will impact Medicaid access to many people.

**David Heinen – VP for Public Policy and Advocacy, North Carolina Center for Nonprofits**

David provided an overview of the current legislative short session of the NC General Assembly as well as state and federal developments and their implications. Points covered included:

- North Carolina is the only state without an approved budget, but that does not mean state government has shut down. The General Assembly amended the State Budget Act in 2016 to stipulate that if no budget is passed, the recurring funding from the current budget continues. In lieu of a comprehensive state budget, the General Assembly has also passed three mini budgets to fund essential service in the last several years.
- There have been 257 Executive Orders issued by President Trump since he returned to office and many of these have impacted state operations and non-profits.
- Federal grant reductions have presented challenges to many agencies. One-third of non-profits have reported that they have been impacted by these disruptions.
- The General Assembly has only approved 100 bills in 2025 and so far in 2026.
- The NC House and Senate have been at odds over several issues that have held up the passage of a state budget. The leaders have now agreed on these issues which include raises for teachers and state employees, funding for a new children's hospital, and the state tax rate. The House wanted to slow down planned tax reductions to maintain revenue while the Senate wanted to accelerate tax cuts.
- There will be a proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot this fall that would cap the state's income tax rate at 3.49%. If passed, this would limit future revenue collections and could affect appropriations in coming years.
- There has been a lot of attention by the General Assembly on the issue of local property taxes. Several proposals to scale back current property tax exemptions that are allowed have been put forward and there will be another constitutional amendment of the ballet for the upcoming election to restrict the ability of cities and counties to raise property taxes. There is concern about this from local governments because property taxes are their major source of revenue to fund services and programs. No property tax relief proposals have been put forward to assist older adults and persons with disabilities who have a high property tax burden.
- The discussions and resulting actions at the state and federal level around diversity, equity, and inclusion have impacted many nonprofits. Based on surveys by the NC Center for Nonprofits of how DEI policies have impacted them, 22% reported pushback and 42% had to reframe their services. Several bills related to DEI were vetoed by Governor Stein last session and are subject to veto overrides this legislative session.
- The Center has been working with legislators to pass legislation to modernize laws related to non-profit. In 2025, bills were introduced in both the House and Senate to exempt 501(c)(3) organizations from paying sales tax on their purchases instead of seeking semi-annual refunds of the sales taxes that they pay. In April 2026, a separate bill (SB 860) was introduced in the NC Senate that would also create a nonprofit sales tax exemption process.

**Coalition Updates/Announcements**

- Kay noted that May is Older Americans Month. There will be an observance for this at the Governor's Mansion on May 21 that she, Mary Sandra and numerous Coalition Board members will attend, and the

Mansion will be lit up later on in observance of Elder Abuse Awareness Month. She shared that she and Sandra had the opportunity to participate in communications training made available to them through the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. On May 12, the Coalition and AARP North Carolina partnered together to hold an Aging Advocacy Education Day at the General Assembly. Twenty-one people convened at the legislative building to learn about the legislative process and then take a tour. Chris Brandenberg with AARP North Carolina gave several advocacy trainings to small groups. Coalition Board members Teresa Troup, Lee Dobson, and Mike Kondratick as well as Demarcus Andrew with AARP North Carolina were thanked for leading tours of the legislative building. The Coalition continues to track legislative developments and will provide an update in the upcoming newsletter about what is going on.

- Sandra did a shout out to Lindsey Goldman with the Alzheimer's Association who did the Health Equity Committee's first hot topic presentation on May 8 on Building Healthy Brain Habits: Taking Care of Your Cognitive Health. This is posted on the Coalition's website. She has been participating in the All Ages, All Stages NC workgroup on Financial Education and Planning. The workgroups first Monday Matters webinar was held and a link to this will be provided in the Coalition's newsletter. She has completed the 990 form for the Coalition and submitted this and is working on renewing the Coalition's solicitation license.
- Lee Dobson, Coalition Board Vice-Chair and Chair of the Public Policy Committee' shared that the Committee has put together an operational policy of how decisions are made relative to establishing the Coalition legislative agenda. This ensures member engagement. She added her thanks for those who help made the Aging Advocacy Education Day possible and for those who attended. She noted that the Coalition encourages members to do in-district meetings with legislators in the summer and fall. The Coalition will put together tips and a guide for doing this. She also shared that the Coalition has submitted a proposal to do a presentation on advocacy at the fall conference conducted by the Centralina Area Agency on Aging in Charlotte.
- Rosalie Calarco, Co-Chair of the Health Equity Committee, gave an update on the Health Equity Committee activities. On June 12, the 2026 Speaker Series presentation will be *Advanced Care Planning for All* presented by Betsy Barton, MPH, CT – Director of Special Projects at Transitions LifeCare. This presentation will also be posted on the Coalition's website. Members were reminded that May 17 is No Menthol Sunday, an initiative through the Center for Black Health and Equity.

**Membership Announcements**

- Heather Altman announced that the NC Serious Illness Coalition's June 12 monthly meeting will include a presentation by Dr. Kimberly Johnson from Duke University. She is a specialist in geriatric palliative care and will be talking about her work in the African-American community pertaining to health equity and end-of-life issues. She also shared information about bills introduced in the General Assembly to make changes in advanced care planning documents to make them easier to execute (HB 349 and HB 1115 which is put forward by the General Statutes Commission).
- Lee Dobson (BAYADA Home Health Care/Hearts for Home Care) shared that on May 13 they had their Advocacy Day for home care and hospice at the General Assembly. They had 185 people to attend from 65 different agencies to ask for support for caregivers in the workforce to make home care possible and funding to also protect what is already available. It was a positive day.
- Steve Hahn with AARP North Carolina highlighted concerns about Bitcoin ATM machines being used for fraudulent activities targeting older adults and shared resources for preventing scams. AARP North Carolina volunteers visited stores in Cary that have machines and shared a sign they asked the stores to post about awareness of fraudulent activities.
- Misty Piekaar-McWilliams with the NCDHHS Division of Aging announced that their next webinar will be held on May 29 at 10:00 a.m. It will be presented by the State Medical Officer, Dr. Larry Greenblatt, on the topic of cannabis use in older adults.

- Melody Beaty introduced herself as the new Vice President of Medicaid Home Care and Private Pay Services with the Association of Hospice and Home Care of North Carolina.

**No Additional Business Identified**

**Upcoming NCCOA Membership Meeting (from 10:00 – 12:00):** June 26, 2026

Meeting adjourned at 11:47 a.m.
Respectfully submitted, Sandra Phelps, Executive Director