NC Coalition on Aging Year in Review
September 2026

The past twelve months have been an exciting time for the North Carolina Coalition on Aging. New funding enabled the Coalition to increase staffing and expand its work in collective advocacy, education, and public policy. In May, Executive Director Sandra Phelps, who ably served in the role for 15 months, transitioned to the newly created position of Operations Director. Kay Paksoy Castillo, an aging advocate and nonprofit leader, joined the Coalition as Executive Director. The Coalition has continued to expand its reach and strengthen efforts to improve the quality of life for older adults across the state. We are deeply grateful to our members, partners, and supporters whose engagement makes this work possible. While much has been accomplished, significant challenges and opportunities remain.

Supporting Members

- **Engaged members through monthly meetings:** Hosted nine monthly Zoom meetings featuring speakers and timely information on aging issues. Meeting materials and recordings are posted on the Coalition's website when available.
- **Held the annual meeting:** Hosted an in-person annual meeting in September of last year featuring networking, information exchange, and a keynote presentation on challenges facing Social Security.
- **Shared timely information:** Distributed monthly email updates covering state and national issues, resources, and opportunities, along with a monthly calendar of aging-related events.
- **Provided education and presentations:** Presented numerous times to member organizations and at other events including the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work Legacy Speakers Series, the 2026 Adult Day Services Conference, and to classes led by Coalition members.
- **Strengthened collaboration:** Connected members and outside organizations around shared issues, including grandparent support, property tax resources, and prescription drug assistance.

Impacting Public Policy and Legislative Actions

- **Advocated for the Coalition's policy agenda:** Worked with members of the General Assembly and state leaders on priorities affecting older adults. These efforts contributed to the appropriation of $1 billion to fully fund Medicaid needs for FY 2026–27 and $500,000 for the NC Senior Games program, which had not been funded the previous year.
- **Advocated for Medicaid:** Participated in the Medicaid Day of Action at the NC General Assembly on October 20 with more than 25 statewide organizations representing home and community-based services, mental health, developmental disabilities, substance use services, and other populations.
- **Co-hosted Education Advocacy Day:** Partnered with AARP-NC on May 12 to provide members and other attendees with legislative tours, opportunities to speak with legislative staff, and information about the legislative process and effective advocacy.

- **Recognized Older Americans Month:** Participated in an event at the Governor's Mansion on May 21, where Governor Josh Stein signed a proclamation declaring May as Older Americans Month.
- **Monitored legislation and the state budget:** Tracked state and federal legislation affecting older adults and people with disabilities and provided members with information about the impact of the state budget passed in July following two years without a budget.
- **Provided public comment:** Provided testimony and/or written comments on issues affecting aging, including Medicaid work requirements, Workforce Pell Grants, the Social Services Block Grant Intended Use Plan, federal grant guidance, draft Olmstead Plans, and the draft NC Aging Plan for 2027–2031.
- **Led implementation of the Multisector Plan on Aging:** Continued leadership of *All Ages, All Stages, NC* as the initiative moved from the planning to implementation phase. The Coalition Board Chair serves as a co-lead for the Plan, Board members co-lead three of four workgroups, and numerous Coalition members participate in the workgroups.
- **Maintained a strong voice for older adults:** Served on numerous committees/advisory groups and participated in policy discussions to ensure the interests of older adults remained represented in key decision-making forums.
- **Advanced health equity:** Supported the work of the Coalition's Health Equity Committee, which continues to address health disparities across North Carolina. The Committee launched a new Hot Topics and Speaker Series this year, with recordings available on the Coalition's website.
- **Supported the direct care workforce:** Continued participation in the Essential Jobs, Essential Care (EJEC) North Carolina workforce collaborative. The Coalition transferred leadership of this initiative to the new NC Center on the Workforce for Health last year. A current wage and rate analysis will inform recommendations to address workforce challenges.
- **Elevated aging issues:** Coordinated a December 2025 *NC Medical Journal* article, *Aging in Place: The Important Role Medicaid-Funded Home- and Community-Based Services Play*, with several Coalition Board members serving as lead authors.
- **Expanded communications and visibility:** Increased media engagement with outlets (Coalition cited in articles) including *NC Health News*, *The News & Observer*, *The Insider*, and *The Charlotte Observer*, while also expanding the Coalition's social media presence and information sharing.

Going Forward

Over the coming year, the Coalition will:

- **Develop a proactive policy and budget strategy** to address challenges affecting older adults and aging service providers, including advocating for a Study Commission on Aging and building on efforts from the last legislative session related to property tax relief for older adults and people with disabilities.
- **Increase awareness** of North Carolina's rapidly aging population and the needs of older adults.
- **Strengthen the Coalition's visibility and reach** to ensure aging issues remain a priority for policymakers, partners, and the public.