

Senior Tar Heel Legislature
June 7-8, 2016
Sheraton Chapel Hill Hotel
1 Europa Drive, Chapel Hill

Press Release

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Chapel Hill, NC: The North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature (NCSTHL) held its second meeting of 2016 in Chapel Hill on June 7-8, 2016. 108 attendees focused on issues that affect our seniors statewide. Six committees, Long Term Care, General Legislation, and Health/Wellness/Prevention/Quality of Life, Enrichment Opportunities, Crime/Safety/Security, and Service Access discussed and triaged proposed bills to send to the NC Legislature for consideration during next year's long session.

Joseph Breen, speaking on behalf of Suzanne Merrill, Director of the Division of Aging and Adult Services, provided the latest update from the current legislative session. The proposed budgets from the House send Senate need to be reconciled. Therefore, a joint Committee has been established.

The major issues for Seniors include: Alzheimer's/respice care; the addition of a non-recurring \$600,000 to Medicaid; the start of the estimated three year process to transform Medicaid from the current fee for service to a managed care model.

If you are looking for community health and human services available in your community, as good place to start is: <http://www.nc211.org/>

Mr. Breen also noted the reauthorization of the US Older Americans Act.

Mark Hensley, Alzheimer's Support Specialist, updated us on Projects CARE, (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty)

Project CARE is the only state-funded, dementia-specific support for caregivers who take care of family members with Alzheimer's disease. Project CARE is a coordinated delivery system that is responsive to the needs, values and preferences of families who take care of family member's with Alzheimer's disease.

<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/assistance/adult-services/project-care>

Alzheimer's is a progressive disease with NO survival rate that takes its toll on families and caregivers as well as the person with it.

Ms Tracey Creech, Customer Service Manager, Rail Division, NC DOT <http://www.ncbytrain.org/> contrasted rail travel and airline travel. On the train seniors get a discount, free parking, 2 free checked bags, arrive downtown, much more leg room! Call 1-800 BY TRAIN.

The next NCSTHL meeting will be Oct 4-5 in Chapel Hill when we will finalize the 2017-18 priorities. Our current priorities are:

Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) Funding

The rapidly increasing NC older adult population continues to place increasing pressure on the system of services, making it extremely difficult for aging adults to age in place where costs are much less than institutional care. The Division of Aging and Adult Services ARMS system, as of October 2015, shows over 10,700 persons in the state on waiting lists for HCCBG services. The funding from local, state and federal sources has remained essentially static over these three years at \$61 million, and federal funding is still below the FY 2012 level. The North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature requests the General Assembly to increase Home and Community Care Block Grant funding by \$7 million in recurring funds.

Uniform Adult Guardianship

The NC STHL encourages the NC General Assembly to adopt the “Uniform Adult Guardianship Protective Proceedings Jurisdiction Act” (UAGPPJA). Enactment of the UAGPPJA will create a process for determining which state will have jurisdiction to appoint a guardian; specify a procedure for transferring guardianships to another state; help facilitate enforcement of guardianship court orders in other states; address the appointment of guardians in cases of emergency; and permit communication between courts and parties in states and jurisdictions to respond to requests for assistance from courts in other states.

Strengthen and Fund North Carolina’s Adult Protective Services Program (APS)

North Carolina’s APS Program must be strengthened and funded in order to respond to the accelerated growth in the State’s aging population, some of whom may be victims of abuse, neglect or exploitation. The State of North Carolina provides no funding for North Carolina’s APS Program. County departments of social services are the sole agencies statutorily mandated by NCGS 108A, “Protection of the Abused, Neglected or Exploited Disabled Adult Act,” to provide the APS Program. The only funding for the APS Program is provided by county governments and a decreasing federal Social Services Block Grant. We recommend that the North Carolina General Assembly recognize and value its vulnerable and older citizens by making available \$5 million in the State budget to meet the growing need for Adult Protective Services in North Carolina.

Preserve or Restore Optional Medicaid Services

Medicaid is a health insurance program for low-income individuals that is jointly funded by state and federal government. The federal government requires North Carolina’s Medicaid program to cover certain health care services and gives North Carolina’s Medicaid program an option to cover other essential health care services, including dental care, eye care and eyeglasses, prescription drugs, occupational, physical, and speech therapies, hospice, prosthetics and orthotics, podiatry services,

community alternative programs, in-home care services, mental health services and rehabilitation services. Failure of North Carolina's Medicaid program to cover current optional health care services will result in increased suffering, and in some cases, premature death, particularly to the NC citizens on Medicaid who are aged, blind or disabled, and will eventually result in greater Medicaid costs for required Medicaid services. We urge the General Assembly to make no change in the Optional Medicaid services North Carolina now provides to its citizens.

Sustain and Expand Project C.A.R.E.

Hailed as innovative and cost effective, Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternative to Running on Empty) was designed and tested in North Carolina. It has become a national best practice model for providing respite services to family members who are caring at home for a relative with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia. The number of North Carolinians afflicted with these dementias', now approximately 170,000, will continue to rise. North Carolina must develop methods to both encourage and support families to assist their aging family members and relatives to remain at home. Resulting savings in public funds are substantial. We recommend that the General Assembly restore the \$500,000 in recurring funds for Project C.A.R.E. in 2016-2017, to include all 100 counties.

The NCSTHL promotes citizen involvement and advocacy concerning aging issues before the General Assembly and access the legislative needs of older adults by convening a forum modeled after the North Carolina Genres Assembly. Find us on Face book <https://www.facebook.com/North-Carolina-Senior-Tar-Heel-Legislature-309756065733168/> or visit the NCSTHL website for more information. <http://ncsthl.org/>