



## Coming Together to Advocate for Older Adults NC Coalition on Aging Updates June 2020 Distributed June 30, 2020

### A Message from Tracy Colvard, Chairman of the NC Coalition on Aging Board of Directors



On behalf of the entire membership and the Board of Directors, we certainly wish Allison all the best in her new endeavors as she leaves us at the end of July. Her steady leadership through unprecedented times did not go unnoticed and will serve the NCCoA well as we search for a new Executive Director. We still have Allison working for us for another month so feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns as always.



### A Message From Allison Costanzo, Executive Director

Thank you to everyone who continues to work hard to keep older adults top of mind during the pandemic. I am thankful for all of the efforts, phone calls, emails, and more that you do each day. I am saddened to announce that I have accepted another position and my last day with the Coalition will be July 31. I have been so lucky to work with each and every one of you throughout my time here and I will continue to be a champion for older adults in North Carolina regardless of my role. If you have any questions or need anything please let me know.

Additionally, my role is available and I would love to see a great knowledge expert on older adult issues take on growing the Coalition. Please reach out to Tracy Colvard for more information. As always, stay healthy! If you need to contact me, you can email [executivedirector@nccoalitiononaging.org](mailto:executivedirector@nccoalitiononaging.org)

### We are Hiring for a New Executive Director

As mentioned above, Allison's last day will be July 31. That being said, we are rehiring for the position of Executive Director. It's a great opportunity to work with the membership, lead the Coalition to expand our reach and our fundraising goals, and work from home all at the same time For more information about the role click here: <https://www.ncnonprofits.org/job-postings/executive-director-108>

### Membership Dues are Due for 2020

A friendly reminder that Membership Dues are paid on an annual basis and are due for 2020. If you or your organization has not yet paid, please go to <http://www.nccoalitiononaging.org/membership.aspx> to submit your application today.

### Update on Joyce Massey Smith

Joyce is making a great recovery! The staff at DAAS and her family are excited to announce that she will be returning to work at the beginning of July with a tentative date of July 7. We are glad to hear that Joyce is recovering following her car accident and welcome her back.

### **June Coalition Meeting**

The June meeting of 2020 was held on June 29th at 10:00am via Zoom. Cornell Wright from the Office of Minority Health spoke about health disparities and advocating for minority older adults. A great discussion about minority health among older adults in North Carolina was had by membership and Cornell. Additionally, we heard updates from the Department of Aging and Adult services from Kathryn Lanier and an update on the General Assembly and the legislative session from Randolph Cloud. He recommended we continue to reach out to our representatives on issues that hadn't been resolved yet in the legislator. It was recorded and will be available online as well as the minutes.

After the discussions during the meeting, the idea of exploring further racial disparities in the aging space were discussed with membership and the board. As a response, we will continue to learn more, talk more, and grow as an organization. As a start, here is an article on reconsidering race when making clinical decisions in healthcare. [Click here to read.](#)

### **Additional 2020 Coalition Meeting Dates**

- No July meeting
- August 28
- September 25 (annual meeting)
- October 23
- December 4

### **COVID-19 Updates**

Please note that the most up-to-date information and questions regarding COVID-19 can be found by calling 2-1-1 or going to <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina>

**The Coalition would like to honor and acknowledge the life lost to COVID-19 this year. Our thoughts are with the families, friends and loved ones for all those who have passed due to the Coronavirus.**

### **North Carolina to Stay in Phase 2 and Masks Required Across State**

On Wednesday June 24 Governor Cooper announced that North Carolina would remain in "Phase 2" for another three weeks, revisiting the state's restrictions due to the Coronavirus on July 17. With this continued phase 2, Cooper announced a mandate that would require everyone to wear masks with exceptions for health and religious reasons. This mandate, and the continued phase 2 go into effect June 26<sup>th</sup> at 5:00pm. For more information on phase 2 [click here.](#)

### **No Patient Left Behind Act Hotly Debated in General Assembly**

The No Patient Left Behind Act which would allow for one visitor (who was not displaying COVID-19 symptoms) to be at the hospital with a loved one failed to pass this session in the General Assembly. The bill, which passed in the house 117-1 had to go back to the Senate for final review before being sent to Governor Cooper. It will likely be addressed during the next session in July. However, many in the senior living/assisted living communities feel as if this is more than the House and Senate is thinking of, as

managing a COVID outbreak in a nursing home is extremely difficult. (NC Health News, Rose Hoban, June 25, 2020) [Click here for the full article.](#)

### **The Critical Role of Area Agencies on Aging in the Response to COVID-19**

A recent Journal on Aging and Social Policy research article highlighted the critical role of Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, built on their ability to quickly assess, coordinate, and respond to the local needs of older adults. Based on a study of AAAs across the country, the article found that the agencies were quick to adapt to the changing environment; creative and resilient in service provision – rethinking meal delivery, limited contact for in-home services, and new approaches to volunteer coordination; and a strong partner to local health system and support networks. Such a combination makes AAAs critical response and recovery partners in the effort to preserve the health and well being of older adults in their local communities.

These findings come as no surprise to TJCOG-ers, who witness the innovative and adaptive-ness of the [Triangle J Area Agency on Aging](#) and its network of local service partners, and to federal legislators, who invested over a billion dollars in the network of AAAs to provide nutrition, home and community-based services, and support for caregivers, through their COVID-19 response bills.

Previous research suggests these partnerships between AAAs and health networks help to prevent unnecessary hospitalizations and nursing home admissions. Building upon this existing hub of service delivery and support for older adults is critical as communities seek to limit unnecessary admissions during COVID-19.

Read the full article on the innovative role of AAAs during COVID-19 [here](#).

### **Pandemic Forced Insurers to Pay for In-Home Treatments, Will They Disappear?**

With a push from COVID-19, such “hospital-at-home” programs and other remote technologies — from online visits with doctors to virtual physical therapy to home oxygen monitoring — have been rapidly rolled out and, often, embraced.

As remote visits quickly ramped up, Medicare and many private insurers, which previously had limited telehealth coverage, temporarily relaxed payment rules, allowing what has been an organic experiment to proceed.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime thing,” said Preeti Raghavan, associate professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation and neurology at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. “It usually takes a long time — 17 years — for an idea to become accepted and deployed and reimbursed in medical practice.” Read the full article from Kaiser Health News to learn more. (Kaiser Health News, Julie Appleby, June 23, 2020) [Click here for the full article.](#)

### **Bring the warmth of family visits back to those isolated in nursing home**

Nursing home residents took the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now they’re being hit by a second threat – the effects of prolonged isolation.

Cut off from family visits and communal activities, many residents have been largely confined to their rooms for more than three months and cared for by staff wearing masks and other protective gear. Now the process of shielding them is taking a toll on the residents' mental and physical health.

Strict limits on visitation recommended by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and followed by North Carolina made sense in the pandemic's early stages, but as the lockdown drags on the limits are sometimes doing more harm than good. Residents feel abandoned. Some lose the will to live.

The federal guidelines for resuming visits include: A decline in cases in the surrounding community, no new cases in the home for 28 days, weekly testing of all staff, adequate supplies of protective equipment and no staff shortages. It will take months for most of the state's 427 Medicaid/Medicare-approved nursing homes to meet all those benchmarks. Given the pressing need, flexibility is in order.

William Lamb, the board chairman of Friends of Residents in Long-Term Care, described the case of a friend's mother who entered an assisted living section of a nursing home in fairly good health before the COVID-19 lockdown. Since then she's grown agitated, has stopped eating and has been moved to a nursing home bed.

"Her mom's going to die and it's not going to be from COVID," he said. "Something is going to have to give as far as being creative in finding ways to promote interaction between families and residents."

New Jersey health officials recently announced that nursing homes there can allow [in-person visits outside](#) with restrictions. On Tuesday, [Colorado followed suit](#). North Carolina should join them as soon as its COVID-19 numbers allow. Until then, it should find ways to step up virtual and window visits.

Last week, the Department of Health and Human Services offered new guidelines supporting outdoor visits at assisted-living and residential treatment facilities. The changes do not apply to skilled nursing facilities, including combination skilled nursing/adult care assisted living facilities.

As its COVID-19 numbers improve, North Carolina nursing homes should be allowed to do something similar to other states where family members can visit outdoors with masks and social distancing restrictions. Additional precautions might need to be taken, such as visitors bringing evidence of a recent negative COVID test.

Improving the care of nursing home residents is especially needed given North Carolina's poor record so far. Of the state's more than 1,300 COVID-19 deaths, 50 percent have been nursing home residents, a rate above the national rate of 40 percent. Prolonging isolation could widen that gap by weakening more residents.

Meanwhile, the state is still not testing [all nursing home workers](#) on a regular basis. As a result, family members can't meet outside with residents while infected but asymptomatic staffers may spend long hours inside nursing homes.

Catherine Sevier, a nurse and president of North Carolina AARP, said more needs to be done to help residents. "We need to protect people," she said, "but at the same time not have them die of loneliness and the stress of being locked in place without being able to see family."

Gov. Roy Cooper and Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mandy Cohen have done fine work in responding to the pandemic by being vigilant and cautious. But nursing homes appear to be

an area where too much caution creates another risk. They should find a safe way to ease the isolation of those most in need of the warmth of family. (The News and Observer, Editorial Board)

### **The Next Group of People We Will Need to Care for are the COVID Survivors**

As the disease leaves many people more ill than before, there is a new surge of people who will need healthcare and care giving who suffered from the virus. [Click here for the full New York Times article.](#)

### **Enhanced Enforcement Actions Based on Nursing Home COVID-19 Data and Inspection Results**

This new guidance from CMS announces a new COVID-19 reporting requirement for nursing homes. It also announces a new performance-based funding requirement tied to the CARES Act supplemental grants for State Survey Agencies. Furthermore, CMS is increasing penalties for noncompliance with infection control. They are also realigning quality improvement organizations to assist nursing homes fighting COVID-19. Finally, this guidance provides updates on the limited resumption of routine survey activities.

[Click here](#) to learn more about this guidance.

### **Governor Cooper Seeks to Understand the Impact of COVID on Minorities**

The virus is hitting minority communities harder than white communities and Governor Cooper is looking into why that is. In North Carolina less than 10% of the population is Latino and Hispanic but the rate of infection for that population is 39%. Similar results are occurring for the African America population. [Click here to read the full article.](#)

### **CMS Announces New Changes to the Reporting Requirement for Nursing Homes**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced in June new reporting requirements for nursing homes and is partnering with CDC's robust federal disease surveillance system to quickly identify problem areas and inform future infection control actions. [Click here for the full report.](#)

### **"Strike Team" Used in North Carolina Mountain Town to Help COVID Patients in Nursing Homes**

A group of medical professionals, emergency management teams, caregivers and more became a "strike team" to help stop the spread of COVID in Hendersonville's nursing homes. Even as some were getting ravaged with the virus, the strike team worked together with a plan of action to help older adults in their community. [Click here for the article.](#) (NC Health News, June 10, 2020, Tommy Goldsmith)

### **Meeting the Needs of Elder Care during COVID-19**

The Duke Dementia Family Support Program continues to provide care for those who have loved ones suffering from Dementia. With updated activities like show and tell, video calls, and other ways to stay involved, the team has adapted their providing style to meet today's need. [Click here for full article.](#) (Duke Edu, June 2020)

## Residents Sue For-Profit Nursing Home Over COVID-19 Concerns

The for-profit chain that owns a Salisbury nursing home crippled by North Carolina's worst outbreak of COVID-19 has a slogan. "Care before corporate," the Accordius Health website tells potential clients. Yet, new affidavits in a lawsuit over The Citadel Salisbury's handling of its deadly viral outbreak accuse the facility's leaders and Accordius of basing potentially life-or-death treatment decisions more on financial considerations than the health and safety of residents and staff.

The lawsuit, which was filed in Rowan County on behalf of two Citadel residents, accuses the nursing home and its corporate owners of violating the state's "Patients Bill of Rights" and accelerating the spread of disease by operating with an undersized staff that was poorly trained and lacked necessary supplies. Last month, The Citadel and its owners fired back in federal court. They've asked a judge to throw out the earlier complaint on the grounds that residents agreed when they signed The Citadel's contract to use arbitration to settle any disputes. Officials with the nursing home and Accordius Health have said the allegation that they worsened the spread of the disease is untrue. "No one did anything wrong to create this," Citadel Administrator Sherry Stoltzfus told the Observer in an email. (News and Observer, June, 2020) [Click here for full article.](#)



## VIRTUAL BRIEFING: COVID-19 AND THE HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE GAP

**JULY 14, 2020  
11:30AM-1:00PM**

Join our panel of speakers for a discussion about the impacts of COVID-19 and the influence of the health insurance coverage gap in North Carolina.

### ..... SPEAKERS .....

**JASON GRAY**

SENIOR FELLOW FOR RESEARCH AND POLICY, NC RURAL CENTER

**DR. LACY HOBGOOD**

GOVERNOR, NC CHAPTER AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS  
DIVISION HEAD, INTERNAL MEDICINE-PEDIATRICS AT EAST CAROLINA  
UNIVERSITY, BRODY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

**DR. KAREN WINKFIELD**

RADIATION ONCOLOGIST AND DIRECTOR OF CANCER HEALTH EQUITY,  
WAKE FOREST BAPTIST COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION, VISIT:  
<https://care4carolina.com/event/virtual-briefing/>

## Legislative Updates

### Medicaid Transformation

Lawmakers made it clear last week, they want Medicaid to move to managed care, no more delays. Medicaid, a program that consumed \$3.7 billion in state expenditures, was scheduled last year to transform from a system where the state pays for every test, treatment and hospitalization to one where independent insurance companies get paid a lump sum for managing the care of beneficiaries. But political wrangling over a different aspect of Medicaid – namely expanding the program to cover hundreds of thousands of uninsured adults – kept Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper and the Republican-dominated General Assembly from coming to an agreement over a state budget.

Now lawmakers and the governor, apparently, have set aside the battle over Medicaid expansion in an effort to get transformation moving again. That included legislators removing poison pills from a Medicaid funding bill passed by the General Assembly this week. The final compromise bill also added in \$100 million of funds that came to North Carolina as a result of the CARES Act to the DHHS to support testing and tracing of COVID-19. The bill also allocates \$20 million to support early childhood initiatives. The bill fully funds a \$6.1 million upgrade to the NC FAST information system to finish work on a component that would integrate child welfare information into the rest of social services data. It also appropriates money (\$26 million) to finish up work on the entire system. Neither of these was included in the initial bill and the overall upgrade funding was not included until the final version.

The most important piece of the Medicaid bill is Medicaid's "transformation" from fee-for-service to managed care, a priority held dear by the Republican majority in the legislature, especially in the Senate. "I think both the House and Senate wanted to get the transformation," said Medicaid head Dave Richard. He noted that one important House priority, extra dollars to make Medicaid function, known as the rebase, was also included in the bill, creating an inducement to each chamber to vote in the positive.

The bill includes a mandate to make the transformation happen by July 1, 2021, but the final version took out penalties totaling about \$20 million per month that would have been levied on DHHS had they missed that deadline for rollout. Rep. Josh Dobson, R-McDowell, who spearheaded negotiations on the bill, said the penalties would have been a "guaranteed veto." Richard called the July 2021 timeline "aggressive." Even though the state had spent years gearing up for transformation to happen in fall 2019, the department had to stop work, move people around, and lay off some contractors who were working on different aspects of getting the contracts and information technology infrastructure required for transformation done. (NC Health News, Rose Hoban, 6/29/2020) [Click here for full article.](#)

### Poll Workers to Continue to Receive Unemployment Benefits if Currently Receiving

The Senate and House unanimously agreed to continue to provide unemployment benefits to anyone who signs up to work at a polling place and is paid for it during the Election.

### House Bill 77 Set to Remove Road Operating Assistance Program (ROAP)

House Bill 77, a bill which was created in the House and passed in the Senate with edits is set to zero out funding for the Road Operating Assistance Program (ROAP). ROAP funding provides transportation to rural communities which will have a detrimental effect on older adults and those with disabilities who

are trying to get to medical appointments. The Coalition on Aging, along with many partners including the NC Public Transit Association reached out to representatives from the House and Senate to urge them to reconsider the funding. The legislators have said they will reexamine this issue when they come back in session in July or September. We will keep you posted. Continue advocating! To read an article about House Bill 77 (with quotes from the Coalition and others) [Click here](#).

### **Nonprofits Included in Proposed New COVID-19 Grant Program**

Earlier this month, the NC Senate Appropriations Committee amended a bill ([S.848](#)) to enable nonprofits to be eligible for a proposed new state COVID-19 grant program. The program would provide \$50 million in grant funds for businesses or nonprofits that maintained at least 90% of their employees from March 1, 2020 through May 31, 2020 if they have not received financial assistance through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) or the Main Street Lending Program.

The Center worked with the bill sponsors and other state senators to revise the bill to make nonprofits eligible for these grants. Including nonprofits in this grant program is consistent with one of the six requests in last month's [letter to state legislators from 460 nonprofit organizations](#): "Include nonprofits in small business relief. Like small businesses, many nonprofits need immediate financial support to continue to operate and provide services. As the General Assembly develops or expands loan programs, grants, or other measures to help small businesses, it is essential that nonprofits have full access to these programs." Thanks to Senator Mike Woodard (D-Durham) and Senator Paul Newton (R-Cabarrus) for taking the lead in adding nonprofits to this program. The Coalition signed on to this letter of support. (NC Center for Nonprofits, June 19,2020)

### **NC Senate Approves Bill that Would Limit Nonprofit's Liability for COVID-19 Cases**

The NC Senate approved a bill ([H.B. 118](#)) that would provide immunity for nonprofits, businesses, and individuals from liability for alleged transmission of COVID-19. By extending the immunity to individuals, nonprofit board members and volunteers also would be protected from liability under this legislation. The limited immunity would not apply if alleged contraction of COVID-19 were due to the gross negligence, willful or wanton conduct, or intentional wrongdoing of the nonprofit, business, or individual. The bill, which was released in a committee on Tuesday, would not limit the ability of workers to file workers' compensation claims if they contracted COVID-19 in the course of their employment. The limitation on liability would be applicable for claims up to 180 days after the end of the COVID-19 state of emergency in North Carolina ([Executive Order No. 116](#)).

The bill also would require nonprofits, businesses, and governmental agencies to provide reasonable notice to people entering their facilities of actions they are taking to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Many nonprofits are already doing this by posting signs about their policies for social distancing, mask wearing, and sanitizing. Thanks to Senator Paul Newton (R-Cabarrus) for including nonprofits in this bill. (NC Center for Nonprofits, June 19, 2020)

### **NC Senate Approves Using More CARES Act Funding to Reduce State Budget Shortfall**

The week of June 19, the NC Senate unanimously approved a bill ([S.805](#)) that would allow North Carolina to use \$645.4 million of the state's CARES Act funding to fund certain parts of state government operations during the FY2020-21. This could help cover some of the [estimated \\$4.2 billion revenue shortfall](#) for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins on July 1, 2020. A smaller revenue shortfall is good news (or at least less bad news) for nonprofits; during past recessions, state legislators have made steep cuts to nonprofit funding to help fill budget shortfalls.

Even if the General Assembly passes S.805, North Carolina will still have more than \$1 billion in unspent CARES Act funding. Some nonprofits have identified immediate needs – such as emergency child care assistance – that could be alleviated with a portion of this funding. If the federal government provides state and local governments more flexibility, some of the remaining CARES Act money could also be used to reduce the state's budget hole for next year. (NC Center for Nonprofits)

## **News in North Carolina**

### **NC Center for Nonprofits Offers Re-Engagement Guide for Nonprofits**

In the past few months, nonprofits have successfully adapted to the challenges of serving our missions in the face of a pandemic. Now, as North Carolina reopens and nonprofit staff begin to return to offices and reopen facilities, the Center has pulled together recommendations and considerations to help organizations plan and prepare. [Going Forward: Best Practices and Considerations for Nonprofit Re-Engagement](#) offers guidance on everything from operations, human resources and board governance to communications, donor relationships and events. (NC Center for Nonprofits)

### **Governor Cooper Signs Absentee Voting Changes into Law**

Beginning of June, Governor Roy Cooper signed into law a bill ([H.B. 1169](#)) that makes several changes to North Carolina's absentee voting process to make it easier for North Carolinians to vote by mail in 2020. These changes include:

1. Allowing North Carolinians to request absentee ballots online rather than by mail;
2. Simplifying the requirements to request an absentee ballot this year by only requiring one witness (current law requires most North Carolinians to have either two witnesses or a notary attest to their signature when submitting an absentee ballot request).
3. Providing state matching funds to ensure that North Carolina has access to federal election funding; and
4. Requiring the NC State Board of Elections to investigate any internet protocol or virtual private network from which more than 10 absentee ballots are requested. This requirement could lead to the investigation of some nonprofits that provide computer access to clients or residents.

Prior to the enactment of these changes, North Carolina's absentee ballot requirements, which were stricter than most other states, made it challenging for many North Carolinians – particularly homebound seniors and individuals with disabilities – to request absentee ballots. The Center supports

the absentee ballot provisions in the bill, since these changes would help many North Carolinians who receive nonprofits' services vote by mail this fall if COVID-19 remains a problem. (NC Center for Nonprofits)

### **North Carolina Behind in Census Response**

Across North Carolina, especially in rural areas and among minority communities, officials are struggling to get residents to respond. And that delay could cost more than just civic pride. North Carolina's statewide response rate was 63% in the 1990 census, 64% in the 2000 census, and 64.8% in the 2010 census. The current 2020 response rate is 57%. According to a George Washington University study, the federal government allocates roughly \$1,600 per-person, per-year, based on census population data. These dollars support a litany of programs like Medicare, school lunch programs, hurricane relief, and highway planning for the next decade. This year, the U.S. Treasury Department used 2010 census data to divvy out \$150 billion in CARES Act coronavirus relief. "Basically, every important allocation that occurs at the federal level is influenced in some way by census data," said Tim Love, Buncombe County's intergovernmental affairs director.

On the political side, census data determines how states will redraw state legislator and congressional districts in 2021, how many representatives they'll send to Washington D.C., and how many electoral votes North Carolina will possess in the 2024 and 2028 presidential elections. Operating amid the coronavirus pandemic, networks of North Carolina officials, advocates, and volunteers strive to overcome census obstacles, both systematic and new.

In many rural areas of North Carolina, household response rates dwell below 50%. Avery County holds the dubious distinction of the lowest response rate in the state at 23.5% since the process opened in March. Graham County is second at 24.1%. Nearby, Swain and Jackson counties follow as the 98th and 97th ranked counties, respectively. Transylvania's response rate sits at 46.8% -- more than 10 points lower than the statewide average. The response rate for North Carolina as a whole, 57.1%, lags behind the national average of 60.8%.

Census Bureau data shows areas with elevated online census completion are areas with greater completion rates overall. To overcome these obstacles, North Carolina counties formed Complete Count Committees composed of diverse community stakeholders. With no direct funding to promote the census from the state or federal government, these committees work within existing county budgets to market the decennial event. (Asheville Citizen-Times, June 13, 2020)

\*Note, if you have not yet completed your household census, please do!\*

### **Republican National Convention to be Held in a Smaller Capacity in North Carolina, Big Speech Moved Elsewhere**

The Republican National Convention, originally scheduled to be held in Charlotte, NC will be partially moved to Jacksonville, FL after Governor Cooper could not promise the Republican party a full sized convention without specific COVID-related restrictions lifted. The decision, which came from a back-and-forth between the two groups finalized earlier this month. The delegation will still partially meet in

Charlotte however the President will accept his party's nomination in Jacksonville, FL where COVID restrictions are different than in North Carolina. Here's what that means for North Carolina:

- The group voted to reduce the number of delegates coming to Charlotte to 336 — six each from states and territories. Republicans have nearly 2,500 delegates in their nominating process. All delegates will still vote for the president and vice president nominations, even if they're not in Charlotte.
- Each state's six delegates will vote on all other convention business.
- All delegates and alternates will be permitted to attend the acceptance speech and may each bring a guest, if permitted by law.
- The executive committee also canceled all other committees, outside of the credentials committee. The powerful platform committee will not meet, and the platform approved in 2016 will remain for 2020.

### **\*Partner's Corner\***

Thank you to our 2020 partners! If you are interested in learning how to become a partner and have a message to the Coalition's membership in the newsletter, please email [executivedirector@nccoalitiononaging.org](mailto:executivedirector@nccoalitiononaging.org)

### **UnitedHealthCare- Premium Sponsor**

COVID-19 is profoundly impacting the health and well-being of North Carolinians. UnitedHealthcare remains committed to helping people live healthier lives in our local communities.

- **Waiving Member Cost-Sharing through September 30, 2020**
  - UnitedHealthcare member cost -sharing, including copays, coinsurance and deductibles, for COVID-19 testing and treatment has been waived
  - Non COVID-19 telehealth visits with in-network physicians are also covered at no cost to the UnitedHealthcare member.
- **Encouragement to Remain Physically and Mentally Active Through Free Online Videos**
  - According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, staying physically and mentally active can help prevent, delay or manage many costly chronic diseases. COVID-19 has made it difficult for older adults to remain active. Lack of activity in older adults may increase the risk of diabetes, heart disease, depression and stroke — all which can also harm the brain. Optum, our sister company, is providing free online videos to members and non-members on the **Optum YouTube channel**. The video series is guided by experts in fitness and health care for older adults. The content includes primarily seated tai chi, qi gong, strength and balance, yoga, and Pilates classes. The videos also include brain and emotional health exercises, art activities and nutrition tips.  
[Click Here For Free Online Wellness Center YouTube](#)
- **Free Emotional-Support Help Line**

- Available 24/7 to support members and non-members who may be experiencing anxiety or stress as a result of COVID-19.  
Toll free (866) 342-6892

### **Transitions LifeCare and The Association for Home and Hospice Care- Champion Sponsor**

#### *4 Ways We Can Keep Social Connections With Our Seniors To Alleviate Feelings of Isolation*

Being isolated is usually the result of circumstances beyond someone's control, and these days, much is out of our control. Here are some ways we can connect, revisit, and engage with our seniors:

- Technology - Phone calls, Zoom, FaceTime, and Skype are platforms we use to make connections with friends and family.
- Warm Lines - Friendship Lines, One Hope (NCBAM and others) offer spiritual and emotional support.
- Call lists - Many organizations and nonprofits are conducting regular and systematic calls in order to care for their constituents.
- Caring Teams - Individuals and organizations are identifying, enlisting, and mobilizing community partners, neighbors, friends, and families to keep in touch.

What can *you* add to this list?

### **North Carolina Assisted Living Association and Poyner Spruill- Champion Sponsor**

Thank you to our sponsors North Carolina Assisted Living Association and Poyner Spruill for their involvement in, and support of, the NC Coalition on Aging.

## **People of Note**

### **National Council on Aging Names New CEO**

The National Council on Aging named a new CEO, effective August 31. Ramsey Alwin. Alwin returns to the NCOA after five years at AARP headquarters. NCOA has an ambitious goal of helping 40 million older adults by 2030 and Alwin feels up to the challenge.

### **NC House and Senate Recognize Representatives Black and Johnson**

The NC House and Senate honored and recognize the lives of Representative MaryAnn Black and Linda P. Johnson. Both passed away earlier this year but due to Coronavirus the General Assembly was unable to gather to recognize them. Both Black (D) and Johnson (R) were highly regarded and missed by their colleagues and the community.

### **Senator Jerry Tillman Resigns**

Senator Jerry Tillman from Randolph County (R) resigned in June. He was first elected to the Senate in 2002 and is the second longest running Senator. His replacement will be determined in the November election. He will be missed.

### **Former House Member (D) and Pastor Dr. Sidney Locks Jr Passes Away**

Rev. Dr. Locks passed away at the end of May. He was a representative in the North Carolina House from 1982-1990. He will be missed.

### **North Carolina Institute of Medicine Names New Interim President and CEO**

Adam Zolotor of the North Carolina Institute of Medicine will step down at the end of the month to take on a new role as the Chair of the Department of Family Medicine at UNC School of Medicine. For the time being, Associate Director Michelle Ries will act as the Interim Director.

## **National Updates and News**

### **Take-Up Rates in MSPs and the Part D Low-Income Subsidy**

The National Council on Aging has published a new study highlighting the systematic barriers that keep nearly three million low-income older adults from accessing programs that help pay for health care. This issue brief shows that one-third of people eligible for Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs) are not currently enrolled. Barriers to enrollment include lack of awareness around the programs or an inability to complete the process. This issue brief identifies potential policy solutions for improving access to these assistance programs, including aligning eligibility standards more closely between programs, simplifying the enrollment process, and increasing support for benefits outreach.

[Click here](#) to read the full issue brief.

### **New Congressional Bills Would Expand Universal Charitable Deduction**

The week of June 25th, bipartisan bills were filed in both the U.S. Senate ([S.4032](#)) and the U.S. House of Representatives ([H.R. 7324](#)) to expand the temporary universal charitable deduction that was established in the CARES Act. Congressman Mark Walker (R-NC) is the primary sponsor of the House bill. The [Universal Giving Pandemic Response Act](#) would significantly increase the limit on the deduction (currently set at \$300 in contributions per year for all taxpayers) to one-third of the amount of the standard deduction (\$4,133 for individuals and \$8,266 for married couples filing jointly). It also would encourage immediate donations to nonprofits by allowing taxpayers to take the deduction for 2019 for contributions made before July 15, 2020 and to file amended tax returns to claim this deduction. An enhanced universal charitable deduction is particularly important in light of two recent reports that show declines in charitable contributions. The recent Giving USA report found that, when adjusted for inflation, overall charitable giving was lower in 2019 than in 2017. A quarterly report from the Fundraising Effectiveness Project showed that donations to nonprofits declined by 6% during the first quarter of 2020 as many donors faced financial uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

. In April, the Center for Nonprofits and a group of 461 North Carolina nonprofits (including the Coalition) sent a [letter to Congressman Walker and the rest of our state's congressional delegation](#) asking for them to expand the universal charitable deduction and provide three other types of relief to help nonprofits deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The bills to bolster charitable giving are a direct response to nonprofits' unified message. Look for an additional call to action on this issue in the coming weeks. (NC Center for Nonprofits)

### **Valuing Women's Caregiving During and After the Coronavirus Crises**

A great thought piece about the role women have in caregiving, for their families and communities, and what the pandemic is doing to worsen that. "Women's increased caregiving responsibilities during the coronavirus crisis, compounded by the lack of policies that support caregiving and the potential permanent closure of many child care programs, may result in long-term negative impacts on women's earnings and employment. This will ultimately worsen the gender wage gaps for women—and mothers in particular—and undermine the economic stability of families." [Click here for the full article.](#)

### **Important Dates**

- July 8: Advanced Care Planning Webinar
  - 10:00am-11:00am
  - [Click here to register](#)
- July 8: North Carolina Alliance for Health Short Session Recap Webinar
  - 10:00am
  - [Click here to register](#)
- July 8: Conversational Agents for Healthcare Talk (A conversation with System ED of Care Access & Service Integration, UNC Healthcare, and Senior Software Developer, UNC Lineberger PRO Care)
  - 12:00pm-1:00pm
  - [Click here to register.](#)
- July 10-11: ADvancing State's Virtual Spring Meeting
  - [Click here for details](#)
- August 30-September 4: Southeastern Association of Area Agencies on Aging Conference
  - Asheville, NC
  - [www.se4a.org](http://www.se4a.org)
- December 8-10: NC Center for Nonprofits Conference
  - Save the date
  - Durham Convention Center
- December 8-11: Home and Community-Based Services Conference (NEW DATE)
  - Washington, DC
  - [www.hcbsconference.org](http://www.hcbsconference.org)
- Ongoing: Nonprofit Town Halls
  - The NC Center for Nonprofits is hosting a series of nonprofit policy discussions
  - Click here to find a session near you: <https://www.ncnonprofits.org/events/nonprofit-town-halls>

**Thank you to everyone** who is working to help take care of North Carolina during this pandemic. If there is ever anything we can do to support you, please let me know. If you have not renewed your membership this year and would like to continue to be a part of the Coalition please let us know.

If you have any *questions about the newsletter or would like to be featured in the next update*, please email Allison Costanzo Executive Director, [executivedirector@nccoalitiononaging.org](mailto:executivedirector@nccoalitiononaging.org) Be well!