

North Carolina Coalition on Aging

NCCOA

TO: NANCY SHOEMAKER
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To: All Leaders, members -
greetings!
Dr. A. Helen Martikainen
NCAA UW
NCAA UW. Rep. Board of Delegates
NCCOA
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TO: ALL DELEGATES
FROM: JEAN REAVES, PRESIDENT
RE: TALKING POINTS NCCOA LEGISLATIVE AGENDA
DATE: MARCH 24, 2006

Increase funds to Adult Care Homes, Nursing Homes and Home Care Services to increase salaries and benefits ("pass through") of aides.

We are all aware of the statewide shortage of quality direct care workers. Considerable research, time and dollars have been spent supporting the need for quality direct care workers. Further it has been documented time and time again that, on average, these direct care workers are paid salaries barely over minimum wage, are most often part-time employees, and have either no benefits or minimal benefits. These aides are the front-line caregivers who day after day provide the often thankless tasks of providing labor intensive personal care to our very frail and seriously disabled adults both in Adult Care Homes and Nursing Homes as well as in the community as in-home aides.

It is imperative that we recognize the need for more direct care workers as well as the need to provide them with a reasonable compensation. Therefore we support increased funding that will be used as a direct pass through to support salaries and benefits for this valued workforce.

Appropriate funds to allow increases in the number of participants in the CAP-DA program and in the Special Assistance In-home Project.

Seniors, the disabled and their caregivers have repeated asked for the right of choice to remain in their communities for as long as possible. Both CAP-DA and Special Assistance In-Home Project allow for that choice.

CAP-DA allows medically eligible and Medicaid eligible individuals to combine community supports that will enable them to remain at home rather than being forced into nursing level placement. These community supports could include but are not limited to: in-home aides for up to 6 hours per day, adult day health services, durable medical equipment, transportation, and respite.

Special Assistance In-Home allows medically eligible and Medicaid eligible individuals to receive a special financial allowance that allows the flexibility to be able to choose supports that will allow the individual to remain at home rather than settle for Adult Care Home placement. This allowance could be used for ramps and safety rails, to pay for housekeeping, the cost special dietary needs, monthly life line fees, transportation, just to note a few possibilities.

In the case of both CAP-DA and Special Assistance In-Home individuals are given choices and policy regulating the programs mandate that individual budgets be less than the cost of full placement. Both of these are cost saving programs for our valuable and over burdened local and state Medicaid dollars.

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Increase Homestead Property Tax Exemption income eligibility level to \$25,000...

Income tax laws are such that persons with an income of less than \$25,000 pay no or minimal taxes as they are considered to be "low income". It is therefore the belief of NCCOA that seniors, with an income of \$25,000 or less, should be given Homestead Property Tax Exemption which allows for reducing personal costs and therefore the possibility of remaining in their own homes. These same seniors have paid property taxes for many years and deserve the respect of not having skyrocketing property taxes to cause them to lose what is perhaps their sole asset.

Any income loss to government should be shared equally between the counties and the state. A loss of tax income is much less costly than potential Medicaid costs to house these individuals in institutional care.

Restore the North Carolina Income Tax Credit for long-term care insurance, which expired on December 31, 2003.

The General assembly passed legislation in 1998 to allow individuals who purchase a long-term care insurance policy to claim a state income tax credit. The purpose of the credit was to encourage more people to purchase long-term care insurance policies which assist with the cost of in-home and nursing home care. The result is that you have an increased number of people paying privately for long-term care.

Legislation is needed to re-enact the tax credit which is referenced in G.S. 105-151.28 and G. S. 105-160.3 (b)(7).

Appropriate \$3 million for the Home and Community Care Block Grant for the FY 2007

It is the preferred choice of impaired older adults to remain in their homes for as long as possible. In many cases this can occur safely with the establishment of community supports that are available through the Home and Community Care Block Grant. A few of these safety net services are: home-delivered meals, adult day care or adult day health services, in-home aides, transportation, and congregate meals. Although there is an increased need for services, the state is losing ground in its effort to help frail older people in the community. State funding for home and community based services is 2% less now than it was in FY2000-01. During the last four years, there has been a decline in the number of persons served and the number of services provided through the Home and Community Care Block Grant. Present statewide waiting lists exceed 8,000 persons.

Appropriate \$50 million to the NC Housing Agency for affordable house for elderly and low income persons.

This request is at least two fold. First, if Seniors have safe and affordable housing then they are happier, healthier, and potentially continue to be members of their communities. Secondly, these State dollars make available many more federal dollars that can be used to fund safe affordable Senior Housing Projects and therefore assist North Carolina in having more Senior Friendly Communities that provide a variety of supports and programs for our rising senior population.