

# Commonwealth Council on Aging

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

**Tuesday, April 8, 2025  
10:00 AM – 1:00 PM**

### **LOCATION:**

**Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services  
8004 Franklin Farms Drive  
Henrico, VA 23229**

**Members Present:** Andrea Buck, MD, JD, Jo-Ann Chase (Zoom), Josh Myers, Ellen Nau, Roland Winston, and Carla Hesseltine (Ex-Officio)

**Members Absent:** None

**Guests:** Senator Christopher Head, Terri Lynch, Erica Wood, Martina James, Jennifer Boyd, Judy Hackler, Steve Zollos, Carol Paquette, Mary-Jane Atwater, Glynis Boyd Hughes, Joani Latimer, Marcia Tetterton (Zoom), Jared Calfee (Zoom), and Dana Parsons (Zoom)

**Staff:** Sara Stowe, Kiersten Ware, and Charlotte Arbogast

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### **Welcome and Introductions**

#### **Carla Hesseltine, CCOA Chair**

Chair Carla Hesseltine opened the meeting at 10:06 a.m. Council Staff Sara Stowe made announcements about the live streaming of the meeting and the members participating electronically, and confirmed a quorum of the Legislative Committee was present for the meeting. Members and guests were asked to introduce themselves.

### **Review Proposed Agenda**

#### **Andrea Buck, Legislative Committee Chair**

##### ***Proposed Action: Approve Proposed Agenda***

Legislative Chair, Andrea Buck asked if there were any changes or objections to the proposed agenda. Roland Winston made the motion to approve the agenda as presented. This was seconded by Josh Myers. The motion was adopted unanimously.

### **Review June 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

#### **Sara Stowe, Council Staff**

##### ***Proposed Action: Adopt Minutes***

Sara Stowe, Council Staff presented the June 17, 2024 meeting minutes and asked if there were any edits or changes. Judy Hackler shared two spelling/grammatical errors. Jo-Ann Chase made the motion to approve the minutes with the two spelling/grammatical errors being corrected. Josh Myers seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

### **Public Comment Period**

#### **Sara Stowe, Council Staff**

Herb DeGroft provided a written public comment that was included in the meeting handouts for members and guests. The written public comment provided recommendations for legislative activities going forward and shared support for legislation related to increased funding for Area

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Agencies on Aging (AAAs). No other public comments were received during the public comment period.

### **Working Lunch: Partners Report out on 2025 General Assembly & Share Legislative Priorities for 2026**

#### **All Members and Guests**

Andrea Buck, Legislative Committee Chair shared a brief update on where the Commonwealth Council on Aging's (CCOA) 2025 legislative priorities. She then noted that at the CCOA's last meeting on March 12, 2025, Andrea Buck asked members to share new legislative issues or concerns. Some of the common themes were issues related to elder abuse, nursing facility inspections, assisted living facility licensure and quality standards, Auxiliary Grant Program rates, dementia care, funding of the Long-Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman Program, provisional licenses for assisted living facilities, waivers, benefits to support caregivers, funding for Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), older adult needs around homelessness and affordable housing, and LGBTQ issues and cultural competency in the workforce. Additionally, Andrea Buck noted recent media attention around issues such as elder abuse, elder fraud, affordable housing, and aging in place.

Andrea Buck then asked Sara Stowe to share instructions on how the partner report outs will be conducted during the meeting.

#### *Dana Parsons- LeadingAge Virginia*

Dana shared that LeadingAge's priorities are focused around 3 categories: workforce, providers, and consumers. In 2025, the organization provided advocacy and support to the following legislation:

- Funding for AAAs
- Adult Day Center Medicaid rate shift from a daily rate to an hourly rate
- Enable local governments to require new assisted living residences to set aside units for low-income residents, which was also an NVAN priority
- Electronic monitoring of nursing facility rooms. LeadingAge worked with legislators on language and for monitoring of semi-private rooms to be video only.
- Professional liability insurance for nursing homes
- Nursing facility licensure fees increase needs and options
- HB1723: establishes a Department of Social Services-led workgroup to improve access to and maximize federal food assistance programs. LeadingAge has reached out to participate.
- A letter was drafted by Delegate Rodney Willett to Delegate Mark Sickles requesting an analysis of palliative care as a Medicaid benefit.

Andrea Buck shared a summary of commonalities, focusing on AAA Funding and NVAN partnerships on assisted living affordability funding.

#### *Northern Virginia Aging Network (NVAN)- Terri Lynch and Erica Wood*

Terri Lynch began by giving a brief overview of NVAN and the stakeholders who are involved in the group. Terri shared that NVAN typically has 3 legislative and 3 budget-related legislative priorities as well as a list of continuing concerns. In May, NVAN will outline their 2026 legislative priorities. Erica shared NVAN's 2025 Legislative and Budget Priorities.

Legislative Priorities:

1. Eviction prevention

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2. Enable local governments to require new assisted living residences to set aside units for low-income residents
3. Require continuing education for direct care workers in addressing dementia

### Budget Priorities:

4. Certified nurse aide (CNA) recruitment and training program- based on a training model from Minnesota. Erica shared there is some training in Virginia through the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), but minimal slots are available and eligibility is strict.
5. Increase funding for core AAA services
6. Increase minimum monthly SNAP benefit from \$23 to \$50 for older adults

In addition to NVAN's 6 main priorities, NVAN's Continuing Concerns were related to:

- Stronger nursing home standards and staffing—federal rules will take precedence
- Increasing funding for the LTC ombudsman
- Greater infection control and LTC enforcement
- Increase in personal needs allowance (PNA) and Auxiliary Grant Program rate
- Older inmates release study
- Regional Older Adult Facility Team (RAFT) statewide expansion and additional funds for the Northern Virginia RAFT
- Medical Aid in Dying

Members asked about the alignment between the CNA training model and the VCCS G3 program, and members seemed to think they function and serve different purposes and audiences. Members asked other questions, and Marcia Tetterton requested groups to be mindful of the gaps created by consumer-directed (CD) and agency-directed (AD) personal care when legislation is introduced for one and not the other.

### *Virginia Villages Collective (VVC) - Carol Paquette and Mary-Jane Atwater*

Carol Paquette shared a brief overview of the villages model and state of villages in Virginia. The VVC requested funding for fostering the development of villages in Virginia. Andrea and Roland asked clarifying questions on cost-effectiveness and about villages in Virginia.

### *Virginia Assisted Living Association (VALA)- Judy Hackler*

Judy shared briefly about VALA and listed legislative concerns and priorities:

- Need for workforce support
- Fully funding the Auxiliary Grant (AG). The line item exists, but funding is consistently returned to the Treasury because it is unspent.
- Increasing the AG personal needs allowance (PNA)
- Support the statewide expansion of RAFT
- Reduce barriers to licensure. Currently Virginia licensure is the most stringent and many regulations are in conflict with content on the national licensure exam.
- The need for more oversight of resident referral agencies (an example is A Place For Mom). Communities may incur an additional charge if an individual was searching the internet for a community and may not be aware of the charges. A resident may also be persuaded to move for the referral agency to receive another stipend.

Andrea Buck shared some commonalities she has heard: opportunities with RAFT, AG PNA, and workforce opportunities. Marcia shared that repealing existing requirements that do not promote efficiency or improve quality may be a helpful strategy.

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### *Alzheimer's Association of Virginia- Joshua Myers*

Josh Myers shared the following priorities of the Alzheimer's Association:

- Virginia Memory Project funding of \$150,000 per year for operations
- Renew Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Commission (ADRDC) which is set to sunset in 2026
- Dementia Case Management budget funding to expand to two additional areas: Richmond and Roanoke
- In terms of 2026, Josh shared they are awaiting any federal impacts. Currently the Healthy Brain and BOLD initiatives have been impacted at the federal level; no federal level staff being assigned to those initiatives. However the local staff and efforts have not been impacted yet.

Andrea shared the commonalities of dementia services and RAFT programs.

### *AARP Virginia- Jared Calfee*

Jared Calfee shared that AARP Virginia supported 25 pieces of legislation in this year's General Assembly and shared updated on a few of those:

- Legislation that passed: nursing home licensure inspections and use of fees, addition of Medigap open enrollment period, and the seizure of property if it was used in a fraudulent act.

AARP Virginia is looking into a few items to bring back for 2026:

- Crypto current fraud
- Affordable assisted living, which is also an NVAN priority
- Prescription Drug Affordability Board
- Age discrimination protections
- Expanding the eviction timeline, which is also an NVAN priority
- Incapacitated adult voting- changing the default to eligibility to vote until unless otherwise provided in court proceedings
- Presumptive eligibility for Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS); AARP thought the legislation had a flawed fiscal impact this year, but hopes to bring that back next year with an updated analysis
- CNA training program, which Jared further discussed regarding its differences to the VCC G3 program
- Jared shared a concern about the Medicaid cuts at the federal level. Currently, Virginia funds 10% of Medicaid Expansion and if the federal match falls below the current 90% then Medicaid Expansion will automatically end.
- A few other notable items mentioned were: family caregiver tax credit, paid leave for caregivers, and Auxiliary Grant rates and PNA increases.

Members asked Jared Calfee a few follow-up questions. Marcia Tetterton shared her concern with the current HCBS system capacity and the need for more funding before moving forward with presumptive eligibility for Medicaid HCBS.

Following a quick break, Andrea asked if any Legislative Committee members wanted to share their thoughts. Ellen Nau shared a concern regarding the LTC insurance industry and payments stopping abruptly. She also shared concerns about nursing facility ownership. Marcia Tetterton suggested the Attorney General's Office may be able to look into some of the LTC insurance issues through their elder law division.

### *Virginia PACE Alliance- Jennifer Boyd*

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Jennifer Boyd shared a brief overview of PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly). Jennifer shared challenges in the ability for PACE programs to expand based on zip code process at DMAS. Jennifer shared PACE programs often work with individuals who need assisted living paid when their Auxiliary Grant or other payor ends. Medicaid adult day rates are in need of an increase. Jennifer also shared a few federal level impacts as well. Roland Winston asked some clarifying questions.

### *Virginia Association for Home Care and Hospice (VAHC)- Marcia Tetterton*

Marcia briefly shared about VAHC. Marcia shared about the following concerns:

- Reimbursement rates for home care and hospice
- Workforce challenges
- Managed care implementation
- Continued concerns about the potential for Medicaid block grants and funding loss

### *State Long-Term Care Ombudsman- Joani Latimer*

Joani Latimer thanked everyone for their work and support. The LTC Ombudsman Program supported legislation related to:

- LTC staffing levels and funding
- CNA training program
- Nursing home ownership transparency
- Nursing home licensure fees and intermediate sanctions
- RAFT statewide expansion
- PNA
- AAA funding
- Medicaid HCBS presumptive eligibility
- Increase in Auxiliary Grant rate

Joani also shared the need for the LTC Ombudsman Program to receive additional funding. They are currently stretched very thin with low local program salaries and a need to expand the program.

### *Virginia Association for Area Agencies on Aging (V4A)- Martina James*

Martina James shared her appreciation for all of the organizations who helped support the funding for AAAs during the 2025 General Assembly Session. Martina shared they did not get the 4.35 million requested, but \$750,000 was included in the conference budget. Martina James requested the next partners meeting to be held 8-10 weeks from now once 2025 Session has concluded for the year and organizations can start preparing for next year's priorities.

### *Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia (SSSEVA)- Steve Zollos*

Steve Zollos shared information about SSSEVA. Steve Zollos shared that they his AAA (and others) are in crisis as older adults increasingly face food insecurity, homelessness, and access programs being at risk. He was appreciative of the \$750,000 for AAAs, but once it was allocated among the AAAs it would not move the needle much. Steve Zollos encouraged building relationships with legislators. Carla Hesseltine asked clarifying questions related to SSSEVA's home delivered meal programs and housing/homelessness efforts. Steve Zollos recommended talking with legislators early on in the summer and early fall to secure patrons.

Members and guests shared quick announcements:

## **Commonwealth Council on Aging: Legislative Committee**

- Martina James shared about the Virginia Governor's Conference on Aging May 19-20 in Williamsburg, VA.
- Terri Lynch shared about NVAN's Legislative Breakfast on October 3, 2025.
- Roland Winston shared a concern about the lack of diversity in the meeting and hoped in the future it would be more diverse.

Andrea Buck wrapped up this section by sharing some common themes that came out in the meeting, including those related to:

- The need for access to quality care
- Workforce needs
- Auxiliary Grant Program
- Dementia services
- AAA services and funding
- Fraud, waste and abuse in programs
- The importance of care for everyone at every level

Andrea Buck thanked all of our guests and members for their input and shared how valuable this meeting will be for creating the CCOA's potential legislative priorities for 2026.

### **Public Comment Period**

**Sara Stowe, Staff**

No public comments were received.

### **Meeting Adjournment**

**Committee Chair**

Chair Andrea Buck adjourned the meeting at 1:05 p.m.

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### **Members Participating Electronically:**

- Jo-Ann Chase under the 60+ Miles Away Provision from Ashburn, VA

### **Meeting Handouts:**

1. Proposed Meeting Agenda
2. Draft Minutes from June 17, 2024
3. CCOA Legislative Priorities Summary
4. Public Comment from Herb DeGroft