

# United for OAA: A Call from North Carolina's Senior Centers

Letters, Voices, and Action to Protect the Older Americans Act

**May 2025**

## **Advocacy Toolkit for Senior Centers**

Prepared by the NC Senior Center Alliance Advocacy Committee

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## **A Letter to Senior Center Staff Across North Carolina**

Dear Friends,

First — thank you.

We see you. We know the effort it takes to show up day after day with energy, compassion, and creativity. Whether you're organizing programs, delivering meals, troubleshooting transportation, or just being a steady presence for those who need it most — you are doing life-changing work. And we want you to know: what you do matters.

This advocacy packet was created to support you. Not to add “one more thing” to your plate, but to help you harness the power already within your centers — the stories, the voices, the community. We know our older adults have powerful things to say. This toolkit gives them the chance to say it. Your role? To open the door, make space, and guide them as only you can.

We also know this work isn't always easy. Some days are long, resources are tight, and it can feel like we're shouting into the void. But please don't forget — the good days do outnumber the bad. The laughter in your lobby, the gratitude of a caregiver, the first-time visitor who says “I wish I'd found this place sooner” — it all matters. And when we come together across the state, our collective voice becomes impossible to ignore.

We'd love to spotlight your efforts! If your center participates in advocacy events — whether it's a letter-writing table, a testimonial recording, or a group photo — please send us pictures or short videos. We're creating a statewide advocacy video to showcase the energy and impact of North Carolina's senior centers.

Send your submissions to [jbarracough@iredellcoa.org](mailto:jbarracough@iredellcoa.org) — and let's show the world what aging with dignity looks like.

Thank you for being part of this movement. Thank you for saying yes to this work. And thank you for never forgetting that you're not alone — we're in this together.

With gratitude and admiration,  
Jennifer Barracough and the NC Senior Center Alliance Advocacy Committee

## **1.Introduction & Purpose**

Across North Carolina, older adults rely on senior centers as lifelines—for meals, transportation, connection, and dignity. As the number of older adults continues to grow, the demand for these vital services is rising faster than the funding that supports them. That’s why advocacy isn’t optional—it’s essential.

This toolkit, developed by the NC Senior Center Alliance Advocacy Committee, was created to empower senior center directors, coordinators, and community advocates to take action. It’s not just about raising awareness—it’s about fighting for the funding, legislation, and support that older adults deserve.

Purpose of This Toolkit:

- To support statewide advocacy efforts that protect and expand funding through the Older Americans Act (OAA) and the Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG)
- To mobilize older adults and their allies to share their voices through letters, videos, and community events
- To provide practical tools for hosting advocacy events, engaging elected officials, and documenting efforts for SCOPE
- To ensure lawmakers understand that these services are not extras—they are essential for aging in place with dignity

This is a call to action—for every center, every staff member, and every older adult who depends on these programs. Together, we can show that aging services matter—and that older adults matter.

## 2. Understanding the Older Americans Act (OAA) & HCCBG

### Connection Between the Older Americans Act (OAA) and HCCBG

The Older Americans Act (OAA) and the Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) are deeply connected, especially in how services are delivered to older adults at the local level in North Carolina.

### The Older Americans Act (OAA) – Federal Foundation

Passed in 1965, the OAA is federal legislation that provides funding for a wide range of services that help older adults live independently in their homes and communities. It supports services like:

- Congregate and home-delivered meals
- Transportation
- In-home care
- Caregiver support
- Health promotion
- Senior center programming

### HCCBG – North Carolina’s Delivery System

The Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) is North Carolina’s way of administering OAA funds, combined with some state funds. The NC General Assembly created HCCBG in 1992 to simplify and streamline how services are delivered to older adults. HCCBG bundles multiple OAA service categories (Titles IIIB, IIIC, etc.) and allows counties to decide how to distribute funds locally.

### How They Work Together

OAA provides the federal dollars, and HCCBG is the mechanism that:

- Distributes those funds to counties and Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)
- Allows local planning committees to prioritize which services are most needed
- Supports community-based agencies (like Councils on Aging) in delivering those services

### Local Flexibility

Through HCCBG, counties like Iredell can tailor the use of OAA funds to meet local needs, whether that’s:

- Expanding Meals on Wheels routes
- Providing in-home aide services
- Supporting transportation for medical appointments or congregate meals

In Summary:

- OAA = Federal law and funding source
- HCCBG = North Carolina's system for distributing OAA and state aging funds to communities

### **3. Spring 2025 Advocacy Event Overview**

The NCSCA Advocacy Subcommittee is pleased to present the 2025 Spring Advocacy Event. Use this packet to guide your center for older adults toward a successful advocacy event. The 2025 Spring Advocacy Event is a perfect opportunity to enable older adults to advocate for themselves by sending a letter or video to federal representatives expressing how the Older Americans Act (OAA) funding affects your center and/or them personally. OAA funding is at the federal level and is administered in North Carolina through various aging service programs. The federal representatives, including members of the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA), influence how these services are implemented and supported at the state level.

It is vital that federal representatives understand how impactful centers for older adults are in our communities and their significant contribution to the quality of life for older adults. This funding is something the network of centers for older adults has been advocating for over many years. We now have the opportunity to show how and where the funding is used by allowing our older adults to speak out through their letters and/or video recordings.

This approved advocacy event will count toward SCOPE. However, it is imperative that you thoroughly read and follow all of the instructions outlined below. Simply including the printed instructional packet and tools you have received from the Advocacy Subcommittee will not count toward your SCOPE requirement if you fail to provide documentation that your senior center actively participated.

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Timeline:

1. April 2025 – The advocacy packet will be available on the NCSCA website
2. May 5, 2025 – Begin advertising (Include a selected date for writing the letters—anytime in May, on a day that works best for you, or add it to a special spring event you already have planned)
3. May 28–30, 2025 – Mail letters and/or videos to representatives
4. June 2, 2025 – Document in SCOPE Self-Assessment Instrument

Name: 2025 Spring Advocacy Event

What did the Center for Older Adults do? Secured the Alliance Advocacy Packet, set a date, gathered letter-writing materials from older adults, and mailed them to federal representatives .

Example: At our annual spring banquet, we spoke to the group about the importance of advocacy and allowed time for them to write letters to federal representatives , which we then mailed.

Who was advocating? (X#) of older adults wrote letters to their federal representatives , which our staff mailed. Older adults recorded video testimonials to send via a shared link to representatives.

Purpose: To give older adults a chance to speak up on the importance of funding the Older Americans Act to their federal legislators.

Who Benefited? The older adults in our area and across the state.

Be sure to have documentation of the event, such as pictures, copies of the letters, links to videos, event advertisements, etc.

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**Documentation to Retain:**

- Copies of letters written/completed by older adults
- Link to video(s)
- Documentation of Advocacy Educational Presentation
- Examples of how you advertised/marketed the event (e.g., screenshots of distribution emails, Facebook posts and website posts, newsletters, calendars, etc.)

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**What's in the Spring Advocacy Packet:**

1. Sample Flyer – enter your information: time, date, location
2. Letter to the editor
  - a. (this alone does not count, but adds awareness to the cause)
3. Sample cover letter
4. Older Americans Act advocacy contacts
5. Sample Video script
6. Sample letters
7. Sample Social media posts

## Note About Materials Provided

This packet includes sample letter templates and video scripts to help guide older adults in expressing their thoughts. These tools are optional participants are encouraged to speak from the heart and use their own words. Personal stories and genuine messages are often the most impactful. The provided examples are simply starting points for those who may need a little inspiration or support.

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## Event Ideas:

### 1. Letter Writing Party with Refreshments

Host a welcoming, social event where older adults can gather to enjoy snacks, fellowship, and advocacy. Decorate the space with signs or banners that emphasize the importance of protecting the Older Americans Act. Begin the event with a short presentation or storytelling moment about how the Older Americans Act supports services like meals, transportation, caregiver assistance, or health promotion.

Provide a variety of materials for writing—pens, pencils, markers, colorful stationery, sample statement starters, and envelopes. Display key talking points around the room to help spark ideas and make it easier for participants to express their thoughts. Encourage group brainstorming, peer support, and creativity. You might even provide printed examples or templates for those who may need assistance writing.

Consider adding a music playlist or hosting the event during an already planned luncheon or social to help draw a crowd. Invite board members, volunteers, or local leaders to join and show their support.

### 2. Video Testimonial Gathering: “Coffee, Tea & Advocacy”

Organize a cozy sit-down event where older adults can talk about their personal experiences and the value of the center while enjoying coffee, tea, cookies, or light refreshments. Start with a facilitator-led discussion prompting attendees to reflect on how the center and its services have impacted their lives.

Have a dedicated space with good lighting and minimal background noise where individuals can be recorded one-on-one or in pairs. Assign a staff member, volunteer, or tech-savvy participant to film short video clips. Provide participants with cue cards or prompts such as:

- “My favorite thing about coming here is...”
- “Because of this center, I’ve been able to...”
- “Why I believe the Older Americans Act matters...”

Afterward, upload the videos to a YouTube channel or create a compilation and share the link with your representatives via email or social media.

### **3. “Roaming Reporter” Advocacy Interviews**

Add an interactive and fun twist by appointing a “roaming reporter”—this could be a staff member in costume (e.g., with a microphone prop and name badge), a board member, or a particularly enthusiastic participant. The reporter walks around during a regular program day or event, asking spontaneous interview-style questions such as:

- “What does this center mean to you?”
- “Why do you think lawmakers should support funding for older adults?”
- “What would life look like without these programs?”

These off-the-cuff moments can be heartfelt and genuine—and very powerful. Edit the footage into short clips to post online, send to legislators, or share on your center’s platforms.

### **4. When Staff Capacity is Limited**

If your team is unable to take the lead on organizing the event, consider recruiting a trusted leader from within your center or the broader community. This could be a passionate older adult participant, a Senior Tar Heel Legislator, a local aging advocate, or a member of your advisory board. Meet with them ahead of time to go over goals and expectations and equip them with all the materials in this toolkit.

Explain your staffing limitations in your SCOPE documentation, and describe the steps taken to identify and support a community leader to champion the event. Remember: advocacy can be just as strong when it’s grassroots-led. What matters is that older adults are empowered to speak up and be heard.



# TELL YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

## TO PROTECT FUNDING FOR SENIOR CARE SERVICES

The Older Americans Act is the primary federal statute for the delivery of social and nutrition services for older persons. The Older Americans Act helps to fund:

- ✓ Senior Center Operation
- ✓ Congregate Nutrition
- ✓ In-Home Aide
- ✓ Adult Day Care
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Health Promotion & Disease Prevention
- ✓ Home Delivered Meals
- ✓ And Much More!



Advocacy Event - Let Your Voice Be Heard!!

Date & Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_



Call Us

For More Information



## Letter To The Editor

Subject: Our Senior Centers Are Speaking Up—And They Need Your Support

To the Editor:

Across North Carolina, senior centers are stepping up to lead a meaningful conversation—one that affects every older adult in our state. Right now, senior centers are mobilizing older adults to speak directly to their legislators to support the Older Americans Act (OAA), the federal legislation that funds essential services like home-delivered meals, transportation, caregiver support, and wellness programs.

These programs aren't extras. They are the very things that allow older adults to live independently, maintain their health, and stay connected to their communities. For many, the senior center is their only source of social connection, a hot meal, or transportation to a critical medical appointment.

The [ Your Senior Center], along with senior centers across the state, is organizing an advocacy effort to ensure lawmakers hear the voices of older adults loud and clear. Participants are writing letters, sharing personal stories, and even recording short videos to raise awareness of how vital these services are.

We encourage our community to pay attention to this effort—and to stand with our older adults. Funding for the Older Americans Act must be protected and expanded to meet the growing needs of our aging population.

We invite legislators and the public to visit a local senior center. See the impact for yourself. Listen to the voices of the people who built our communities—and now rely on us to help them age with dignity.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Barraclough  
Chair, Advocacy Committee  
North Carolina Senior Center Alliance

## Sample Cover Letter

[Your Organization's Letterhead]

[Address]

[Phone Number]

[Email Address]

[Date]

Dear [Elected Official's Name],

Enclosed you will find a collection of heartfelt letters written by older adults from our community. These letters represent the voices of individuals who have contributed, endured, and shaped the fabric of our nation—and who now ask for your support through continued and increased funding of the Older Americans Act.

Why is it important to support older Americans through the Older Americans Act? The Older Americans Act has been in place since 1965, providing support for older adults to live independently and with dignity. Statistics now tell us that almost 60% of us will live past 80 years old. These longevity statistics highlight how crucial it is to maintain and expand resources for this growing segment of the population.

It is imperative that the financial support of the Older Americans Act not only remain in place but increase to meet the needs of this vulnerable segment of our population. This group of Americans holds an abundant wealth of wisdom and history which needs to be protected at all costs. The philosopher Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

We must not forget our older Americans. We must make sure that our older Americans' basic human needs are met, which helps them to ensure that their health and independence remains throughout their golden years.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Organization Name]

## **Who to Contact: When Advocating for Older Adults**

### **County-Level Contacts**

Each North Carolina county is represented in the North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature (NCSTHL) by a delegate and alternate (age 60+). These individuals advocate on behalf of older adults in your county and are a great starting point for local engagement.

[Find your county's NCSTHL representative](#)

You can also contact your regional Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for help identifying your local advocate: [Locate your Area Agency on Aging](#)

### **State Legislators**

Your NC House Representative and State Senator help shape the state budget and policies that affect aging services across North Carolina.

[Find your NC State Legislators](#)

### **Federal Legislators - This should be your focus for this project and for Older Americans Act (OAA) Funding**

Support for OAA programs like home-delivered meals, caregiver support, and transportation comes from federal funding. Contact your U.S. Senators and Representatives to ensure continued investment in these programs.

#### **U.S. Senators for North Carolina**

##### **- Senator Thom Tillis**

[Contact Form](#)

113 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510

Phone: (202) 224-6342

##### **- Senator Ted Budd**

[Contact Form](#)

B40C Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510

Phone: (202) 224-3154

[Find your U.S. House Representative](#)

## **Sample Script for Videos**

### **Before Statement**

Hi, my name is [First Name], and I'm a proud participant at [Senior Center]. I'm here today to speak up for myself and older adults like me. Please protect the funding that helps us live with dignity.

### **General Older Adult Needs – Services, Meals, Transportation, Care**

1. This meal is the only thing in my fridge some days—please don't take that away.
2. I'm not asking for charity. I'm asking to age with dignity, like every person deserves.
3. These programs are the reason I'm still alive. That's not dramatic—it's the truth.
4. I gave everything to my job, my family, and my country. Now, I just need someone to care.
5. Without these services, I would be hungry, alone, and forgotten.
6. My senior center gave me something I hadn't felt in a long time—hope.
7. This program is what keeps me out of the hospital—and in my home.
8. It's not just a lunch. It's the reason I see another day with strength.
9. I lost my spouse. This place saved me from losing myself.
10. I worked hard my whole life. I never thought I'd have to fight just to eat.
11. Every time you cut funding, you take something away from someone like me who has no backup.
12. Aging in place shouldn't be a privilege. It should be a promise.
13. Don't wait until it's your mother or grandfather before you care.
14. I used to feel invisible—until I walked through the doors of my senior center.
15. I have no one. This center is my family. These services are my lifeline.
16. You want to know what independence looks like? It looks like me—with a hot meal and a ride to the doctor.
17. We matter. Our lives matter. These services matter.
18. You wouldn't believe how lonely it gets—until someone shows up at your door with a meal and a smile.
19. This isn't about extras. It's about survival.

20. If these programs disappear, so do people like me.

**Senior Center-Specific Statements**

21. My senior center is more than a building—it's my second home.

22. Without my senior center, I'd sit in silence all day.

23. The friendships I've made here have saved me from loneliness.

24. I come here for lunch, but I stay for the laughter.

25. My senior center gives me a reason to get out of bed in the morning.

26. This center gave me purpose when I felt like my life was winding down.

27. When my world got smaller, this place helped it grow again.

28. This is where I feel seen, heard, and valued.

29. Every class, every game, every meal—it all brings me back to life.

30. Before this center, I hadn't celebrated my birthday in years.

31. Here, I'm not just 'an old person'—I'm a person with a story that matters.

32. This center keeps my body moving and my heart full.

33. Without this place, I wouldn't laugh nearly as much.

34. It's not just social—it's survival. Connection is everything at our age.

35. My doctor told me to stay active. I told him, 'I go to the senior center!'

36. This place makes aging feel like a gift, not a burden.

37. I've lost friends, family, and my independence—but I found this place.

38. This senior center gave me confidence I thought I'd lost forever.

39. The staff here treat me with respect—and that means everything.

40. If you cut funding to places like this, you're cutting off our chance to keep living fully.

**After Statement**

Please protect the Older Americans Act and the funding that makes all of this possible.  
We matter. Our voices matter. And we're counting on you.

## **Sample Advocacy Letters for Older Americans Act Funding**

### **Letter 1: Personal and Powerful**

Dear [Legislator's Name],

My name is [Name], and I am a proud older adult living in [Town/County], North Carolina. I am writing to ask for your strong support in protecting the funding provided by the Older Americans Act. These dollars are not just numbers on a page—they are lifelines.

Because of these funds, I can attend a local senior center where I receive meals, stay active, connect with others, and maintain my health and independence. Without it, many of us would be isolated, hungry, and struggling to survive.

We are not asking for luxuries—we are asking for dignity. Please don't turn your back on the older adults who built this country, raised families, and continue to contribute to our communities. Protect the Older Americans Act. Our lives depend on it.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Address or Town/County]

### **Letter 2: Urgent and Advocacy-Focused**

Dear [Legislator's Name],

As one of your constituents and a proud older adult, I'm urging you to fight for the funding that supports critical services under the Older Americans Act. This legislation provides the foundation for programs that allow us to age with dignity—home-delivered meals, transportation, caregiver support, wellness programs, and more.

Without this funding, countless older North Carolinians like me will face unnecessary hardship—hunger, isolation, and declining health. These services are essential. They are cost-effective. And they work.

We cannot allow the needs of our aging population to be forgotten or underfunded. Please, stand with your older adult constituents. Fully fund the Older Americans Act and protect the services that allow us to live, not just exist.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[City/County]

### **Letter 3: Community and Future-Oriented**

Dear [Legislator's Name],

I am writing to you today not just for myself, but for every older adult in our state who depends on the programs funded through the Older Americans Act.

Our senior centers and community programs are more than just buildings—they are places of hope, health, and human connection. Without funding, these programs will disappear, and with them, so will the safety net that keeps thousands of older adults in their homes and out of crisis.

This is not just about today—it's about the future. Every one of us is aging. The decisions you make now will shape what aging looks like for the next generation. I urge you to protect these vital funds and show that North Carolina values its older adults.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to our wellbeing.

Sincerely,  
[Name]  
[Town or County]

### **Letter 4: Bold and Unapologetic**

Dear [Legislator's Name],

I've spent my life working hard, raising a family, contributing to my community—and now, like so many older North Carolinians, I rely on the programs funded by the Older Americans Act to help me stay healthy, independent, and connected.

I am not asking for a handout. I am demanding that our leaders prioritize aging with dignity. Cutting or underfunding these programs is not just careless—it's dangerous. It puts lives at risk. Home-delivered meals, transportation to medical appointments, and programs to fight social isolation are not optional services—they are essential to survival.

You represent all of us—including your older constituents. Stand up and protect the funding that helps us age safely, not silently.

We are watching, and we are voting.

Sincerely,  
[Name]  
[City or County]



## Letter 5: Grateful Yet Concerned

Dear [Legislator's Name],

I want to start by saying thank you. Thank you for serving our state and working hard for your constituents. I know public service isn't always easy—but today, I'm asking you to remember the people who have given a lifetime of service in their own way: your older adult constituents.

The Older Americans Act supports services that I use and value deeply—like senior center programs, hot meals, transportation, and support for caregivers. These are not just programs—they are part of what keeps me going every day.

But I worry. I worry that the funding could disappear or fall short of meeting the growing need in our state. North Carolina's older adult population is growing fast, and the support systems must grow with it.

Please continue to be a champion for older adults. Protect and fully fund the Older Americans Act. We need your voice now more than ever.


With appreciation,

[Name]


[Town or County]


## Sample Social media posts

### **POST 1: “This Is Why We Advocate”**

 Did you know the **\*\*Older Americans Act (OAA)\*\*** helps fund meals, transportation, caregiver support, and your local senior center programs?


These services don’t happen by accident — they happen because **\*\*people like YOU speak up.\*\***


 That’s why we’re inviting YOU to be part of something big: **\*\*our local senior center advocacy efforts\*\***.





 Let’s raise our voices together to protect the services that matter. Stay tuned for events happening right here at the center!


#AdvocateForAging #SupportSeniorCenters #OAAFunding #OlderAdultsMatter  
#NCSeniorCenterAlliance

### **POST 2: Letter-Writing Party!**

 We’re hosting a **\*\*Letter-Writing Party\*\*** at the senior center to show our lawmakers how much these services matter!

 We’ll have:

-  Sample letters & talking points
-  Pens, paper, and snacks
-  The chance to make your voice heard
-  A way to **\*protect vital funding\*** for the services you love


 Let’s remind our elected officials that older adults VOTE and older adults MATTER.

 [Insert date/time]


 [Insert center name/location]


#OAA #AdvocacyMatters #SupportOurSeniors #SeniorCenterStrong  
#NCSeniorCenterAlliance

### **POST 3: What Does Your Senior Center Mean to You?**

 We want to hear from YOU!

Share what your senior center means to you — and help us show our legislators the impact these places have on our lives.

 We’ll be filming short videos from participants willing to share their story. Just a few words from you could help protect funding for meals, transportation, and more.

 Interested in participating? Stop by the front desk or contact [Insert staff name/contact info].

#SeniorVoices #OAA #SupportSeniorCenters #WeAreNotInvisible  
#NCSeniorCenterAlliance

#### **POST 4: Did You Know?**

 **\*\*Fast Fact Friday\*\***


The **\*\*Older Americans Act\*\*** helps fund:

 Meals on Wheels

 Transportation

 In-home aides

 Caregiver support

 Senior center programs

Without this support, programs could face waitlists or reduced hours.


Join us in **\*\*protecting the services that help older adults age with dignity\*\*** — starting right here at [Insert Center Name]!

#AgingWell #ProtectTheOAA #SeniorCenterAdvocacy #NCSeniorCenterAlliance

#### **POST 5: We Are the Front Lines**

We're not just a building. We're not just bingo.

We're the **\*\*front line of aging support\*\*** in our community.

 OAA funding helps us:


✓ Deliver meals

✓ Provide safe spaces to connect

✓ Support caregivers

✓ Offer transportation

✓ Keep older adults active and independent

 Help us make sure these programs continue — participate in our upcoming advocacy events right here at the center!

#SeniorCentersMatter #AdvocateWithUs #SupportOlderAdults #OAA  
#NCSeniorCenterAlliance