

2026 Legislative Update and Advocacy 101

The Commonwealth Council on Aging (CCOA), Virginia Center on Aging, and LeadingAge Virginia partnered to share a legislative update from the Commonwealth Council on Aging's 2026 legislative recommendations and an Advocacy 101 presentation from LeadingAge Virginia.

Webinar Recording:

https://vcu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/CCOA+Legislative+Webinar%3A+Jan+8%2C+2026/1_bowq8ik3

2026 Legislative Resources:

Legislative Resources can be found on the Council's Legislative Committee page:

<https://sharepoint.wvrc.net/vdaBoards/council/Legislative%20Committee/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

Documents included in the 2026 Legislative Resources folder include:

- 2026 CCOA Legislative Recommendations Postcard
- CCOA 2026 Legislative Update Webinar PowerPoint Presentation
- CCOA Legislative Committee Recommendations
- CCOA Legislative Priorities 2026 Sample Letters

Presenters:

Dr. Tracey Gendron serves as Chair for the Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Gerontology, as Director for the Virginia Center on Aging and is the author of the book *Ageism Unmasked: Exploring Age Bias and How to End It*. With over 25 years of experience as a grant-funded researcher and nationally recognized speaker, Tracey is dedicated to raising awareness and ending ageism through education. Tracey has a Master's degree in Gerontology, a Master's degree in Psychology and a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology.

Dr. Gendron has dedicated her career to changing the landscape develop an age-inclusive climate that facilitates growth and engagement in elderhood. Her personal and professional goal is to raise awareness of elderhood as the solution to the deeply embedded ageism pervasive within all cultures, settings and individuals.

Dana Parsons joined LeadingAge Virginia as Vice President and Legislative Counsel in 2003. She is responsible for setting the Association’s public policy and advocacy direction, including all state and federal legislative and regulatory matters, and serves as an advisor to the President/CEO and Board of Directors.

Dana serves as a spokesperson before the General Assembly, state and federal agencies, and the Virginia Congressional Delegation, and supports the LeadingAge Virginia membership with regulatory and compliance issues related to the continuum of aging services. She is a member of the Virginia State Bar and earned her Juris Doctor and Master of Arts in Public Policy from Regent University of Schools of Law and Government. She is also an alumna of the LeadingAge National Leadership Academy.

Josh Myers serves as Director of Government Affairs for the Alzheimer’s Association in Virginia. Additionally, he serves as a Speakers appointee to the Commonwealth Council on Aging. Josh has over twenty years of experience in public policy in Virginia. He has represented a wide variety of interests before the Virginia General Assembly and various state agencies including environmental protection, funding for education, childcare day programs, telecommunications, energy utilities, the technology and transportation industry, and economic development projects. Previously Josh served as the Chief Legislative Aide to the former Virginia House Majority Leader. Currently, Josh is a board member of the Virginia Foundation for Learning Disabled Students. He lives in Chesterfield, Virginia with his wife and their daughter.

Carla Hesseltine is Chair of the Commonwealth Council on Aging and has served on numerous state and local boards focused on aging, long-term care oversight, mental health, and human rights. She has worked closely with legislators to advance and support policies on elder rights, nutrition, and community-based services, grounded in the lived experiences of older Virginians and their families.

Sara Stowe is Executive Director of the Commonwealth Council on Aging and a gerontologist with over ten years of diverse experience in aging services. Sara received her Master’s degree from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in Gerontology and also holds a Bachelor’s degree from James Madison University (JMU). Sara is passionate about elevating aging and making Virginia the best state to grow old.