

# CCOA Legislative Webinar

January 8, 2026



# Welcome

**Dr. Tracey Gendron,  
Executive Director,  
Virginia Center on Aging**



**Gerontology and the Virginia Center on Aging**



# Today's Presenters



**Carla Hesseltine,  
CCOA Chair**



**Joshua Myers,  
CCOA Legislative Chair**



**Sara Stowe, CCOA  
Executive Director**



**Dana Parsons,  
LeadingAge Virginia**



# 1. Increase Funding for Home and Community-Based Services through AAAs

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## Budget Request

*In the amount of \$10 Million of increased funding each year to meet the need*

## Priority of:

- Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging (V4A)
- Northern Virginia Aging Network (NVAN)
- State Long Term Care Ombudsman
- Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia
- LeadingAge Virginia



## 2. Increase Funding for the Nursing Home Inspection and Enforcement Process

### Budget Request

Priority of:

- State Long Term Care Ombudsman



# 3. Establish a Prescription Drug Affordability Review Board

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**Legislative Request with Budget Implications**

Priority of:

- AARP Virginia





## 4. Strengthen Nursing Home Transparency, Data, and Oversight

### Legislative Request

Priority of:

- State Long Term Care Ombudsman



# 5. Increase Funding of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

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## Budget Request

*In the amount of \$1.5 Million*

Priority of:

- State Long Term Care Ombudsman
- Northern Virginia Aging Network (NVAN)
- LeadingAge Virginia





## 6. Increase Funding for Public Guardianship Program Slots

### **Budget Request**

*In the amount of \$2,502,000 to fund all PGP slots at \$7,000/slot annually*

Priority of:

- Virginia Public Guardian and Conservator Advisory Board



## 7. Provide State General Funds for the Ongoing Operations of the Virginia Memory Project

### Budget Request

*Current funding is provided through time-limited grants; ongoing, reliable funding is needed.*

Priority of:

- Alzheimer's Association



## 8. Extend the Sunset for the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission

### Legislative Request

*The Commonwealth Council on Aging recommends extending the sunset by three years to July 1, 2029.*

Priority of:

- Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission
- Alzheimer's Association





# 9. Increase Funding for No Wrong Door's Statewide Resource Database

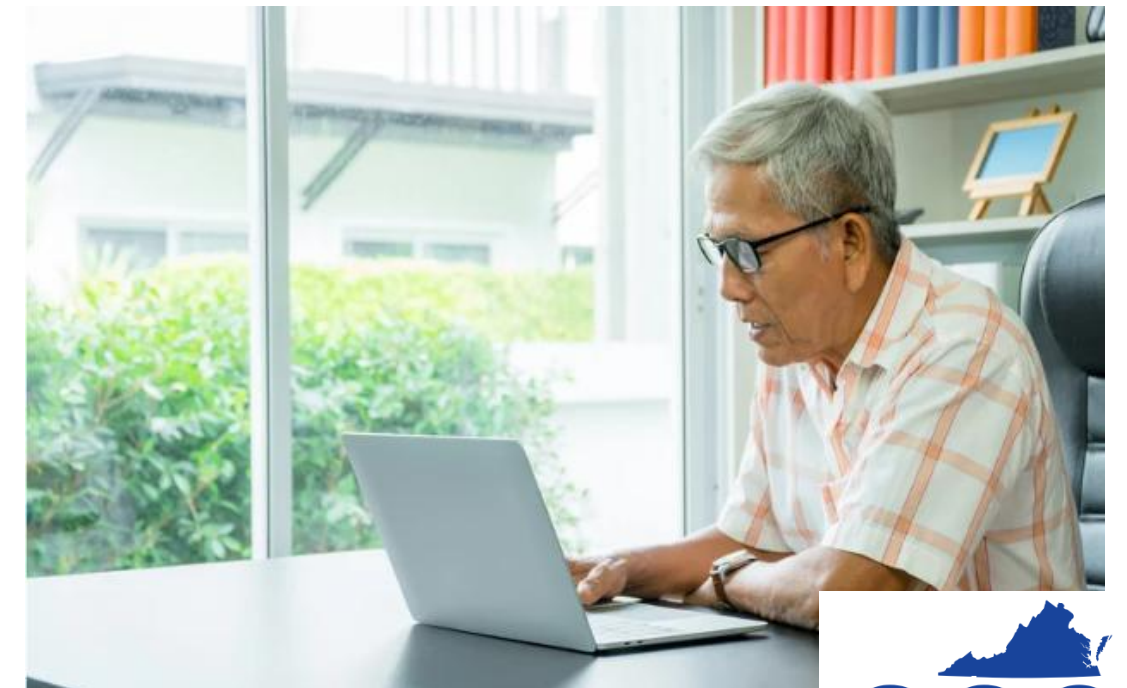
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## Budget Request

*\$165,000 is requested annually in restored funding to bridge the ongoing funding gap.*

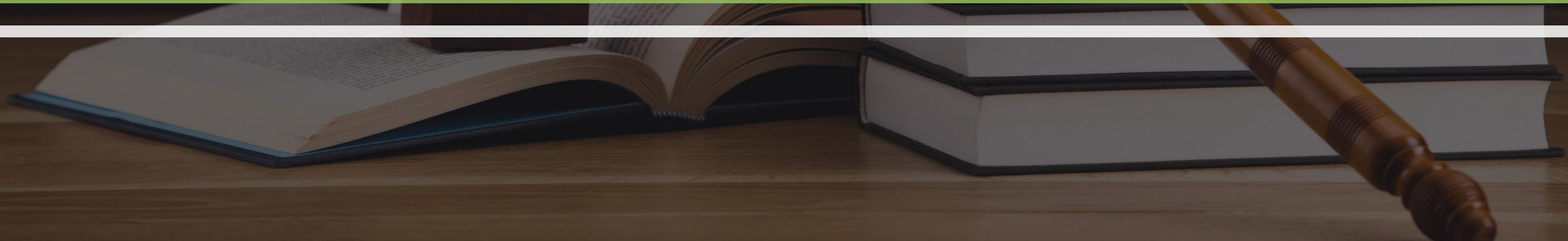
Priority of:

- VirginiaNavigator
- LeadingAge Virginia



ADVOCACY 101

*How Virginians Can Make Their  
Voices Heard*



# Why Advocacy Matters

Decisions are often made by people who don't live your experience and advocacy helps bridge that gap



**Policies shape everyday life**

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**Real-life experiences impact decision-making**

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**Advocacy is for everyone**

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# What is Advocacy?

Sharing information, experiences, or concerns to help decision-makers make better choices



**Speaking up to influence decisions**

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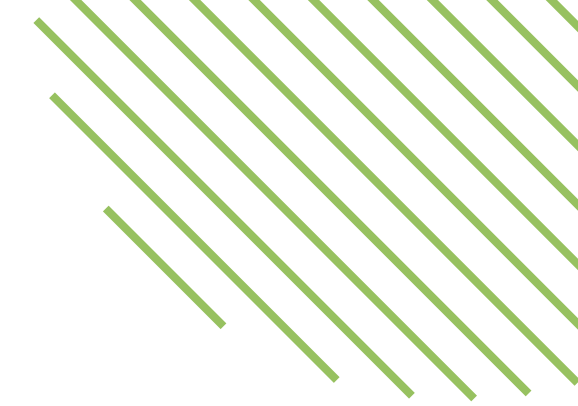
**Can be individual or collective**

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**Happens in many ways**

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# Types of Advocacy



It can be done by individuals, families, organizations, or communities

## **Self-advocacy:**

Speaking up for yourself or a loved one

## **Community advocacy:**

Addressing local issues

## **Systems advocacy:**

Working to change policies or practices

## **Legislative advocacy:**

Influencing laws and public policy

# Advocacy vs. Lobbying

As private citizens, you have broad freedom to advocate and share your views

## Advocacy

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- Sharing information
- Educating policymakers
- Telling personal stories
- Encouraging awareness and understanding

## Lobbying

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- A specific type of advocacy
- Involves asking a legislator to support or oppose a specific bill
- Often subject to rules depending on who you are (individual vs. nonprofit employee)





# Is Advocacy Always About Laws?

Sometimes the most effective advocacy happens long before a bill is introduced

## Advocacy can include:

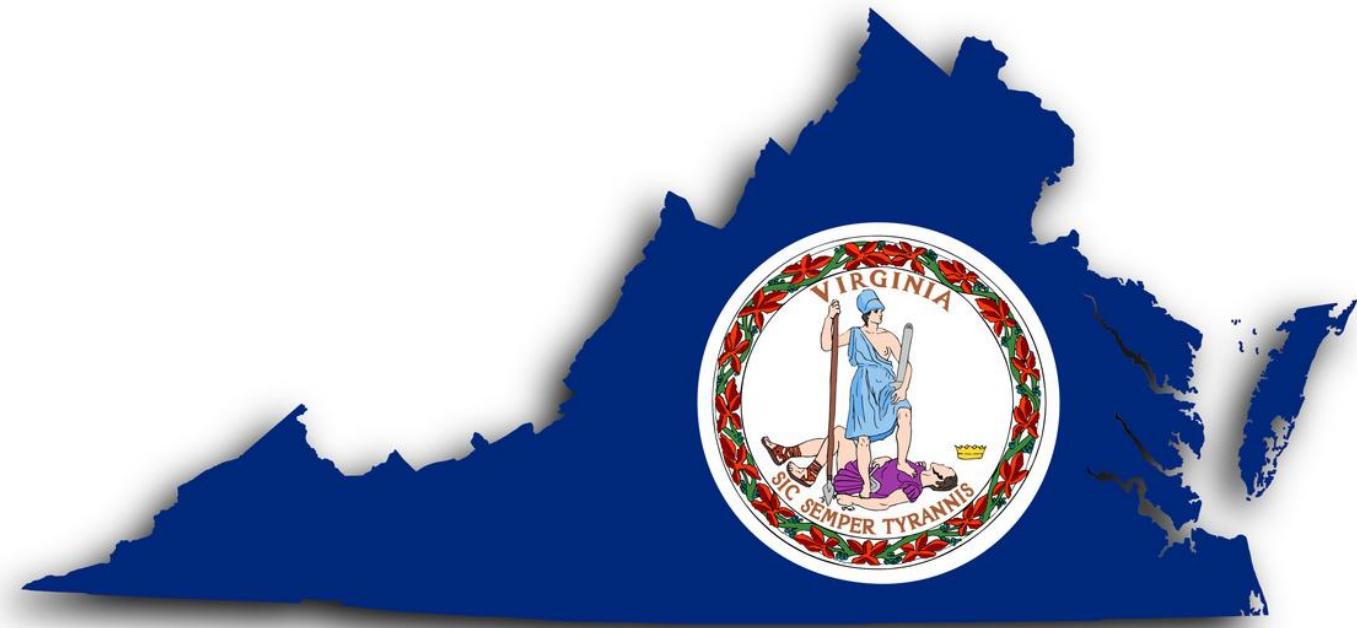
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- Raising awareness in your community
- Serving on advisory councils or boards
- Participating in public meetings
- Writing op-eds or letters to the editor
- Engaging on social media respectfully
- Supporting coalitions or community groups

**Advocacy is  
about influence,  
not just laws.**



# Virginia's Legislative System – The Basics



Every Virginian is represented by one Delegate and one Senator

**Virginia General  
Assembly**

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**100 Delegates  
40 Senators**

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**Meets every  
year**

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# General Assembly Sessions

First convened in 1619, making it the oldest English-speaking, continuously operating legislative body in the Western Hemisphere.



**Short Session in  
odd years (45 days)**

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**Long Session in even  
years (60 days)**

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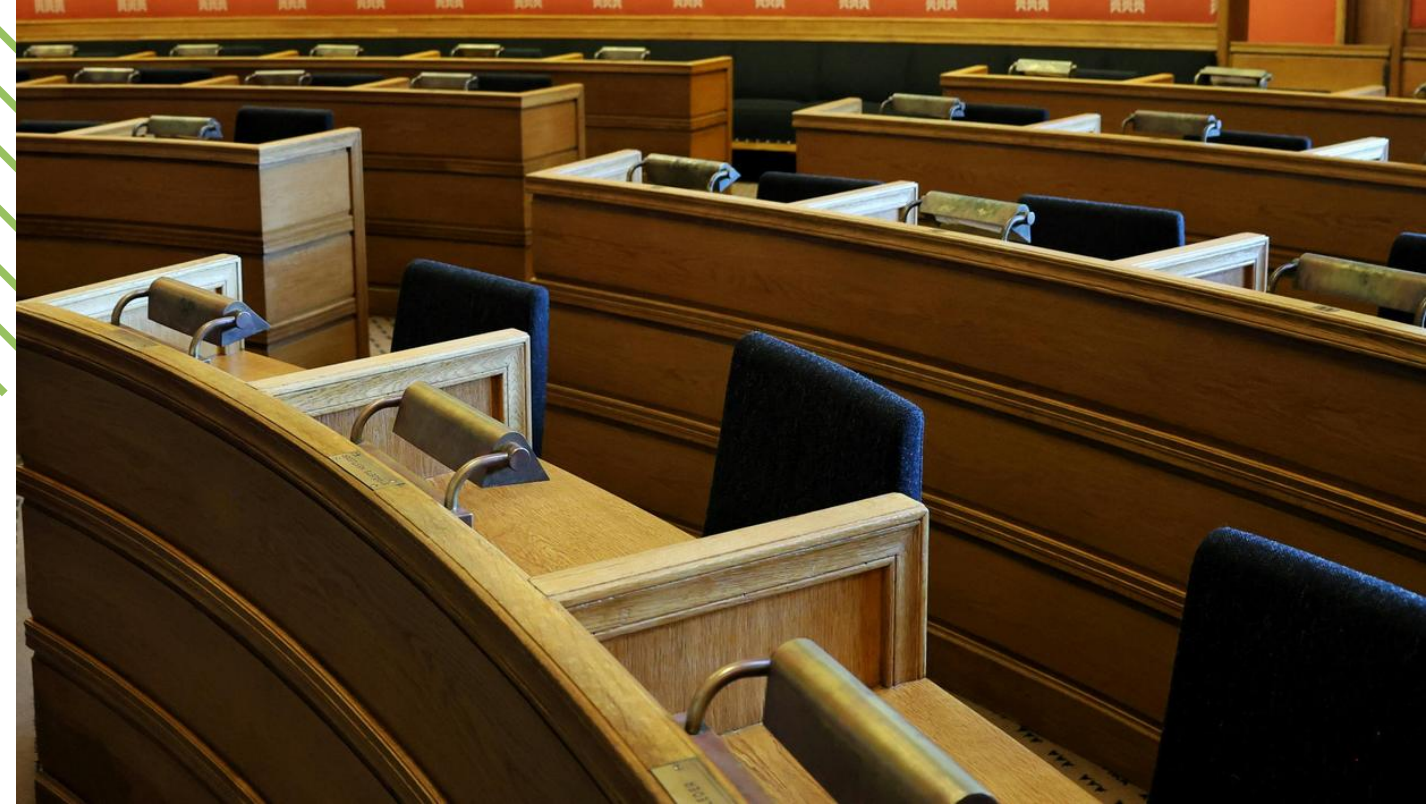
**2,000–2,500  
bills per session**

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# How a Bill Moves

Most advocacy happens in committees, not on the floor



# Advocating During Session

You don't need to be an expert, personal experiences are powerful



**Contact legislators**

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**Watch meetings  
live**

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**Provide public  
comment**

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# Advocating Outside of Session

Advocacy is most effective when it's ongoing, not just during session.



**Advocacy is year-round**

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**Relationship building matters**

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**Local engagement counts**

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# Finding Your Legislators

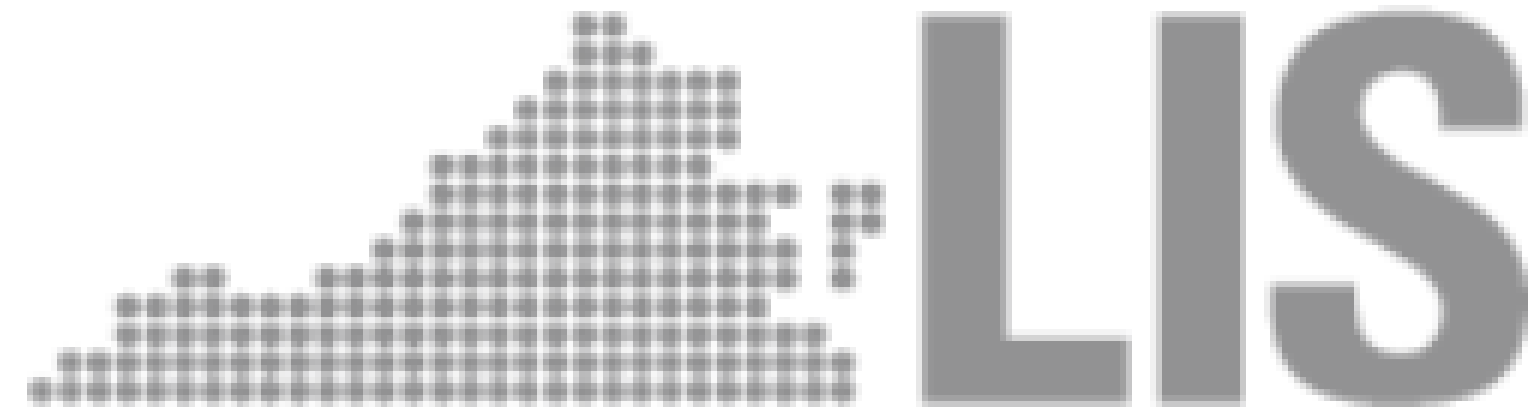
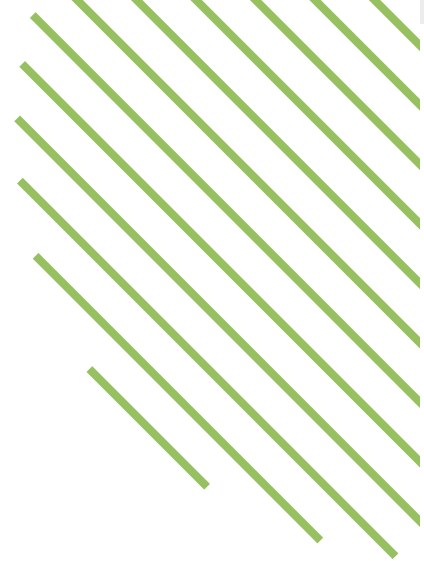
## Find Your Legislators

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- Virginia General Assembly
  - [Who's My Legislator](#)
- Search by home address
- Shows your Delegate & Senator, as well as congressional representatives



# Looking Up Bills



## How to Look Up Bills

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- [Legislative Information System \(LIS\)](#)
- Search by keyword, topic, or bill number
  - Bill summaries
  - Committee assignments
  - Hearing dates
  - Vote history

# Staying Informed

Choose a few trusted sources, more is not always better.



## Virginia News

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- [Virginia Public Access Project \(VPAP\)](#)
- VA News - daily email updates

## Legislator newsletters

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## Trusted organizations

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# Simple Actions Anyone Can Take

Personal stories stick with policymakers far longer than statistics alone.



**Send an email**

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**Make a phone call**

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**Share your story**

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**Attend a meeting**

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**Encourage others  
to engage**

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# Final Takeaways

If something affects you, your family, or your community, it's worth speaking up.



**YOUR VOICE  
MATTERS**

**Advocacy is  
accessible**

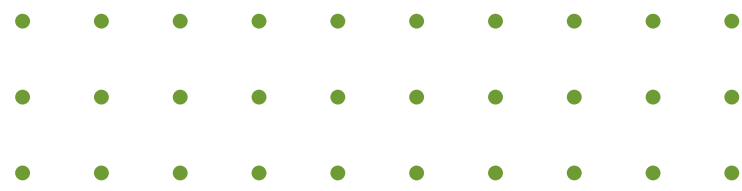
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**Your voice  
matters**

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**Start where you  
are**

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# Thank You!

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(804) 965-5500



[contactus@leadingagevirginia.org](mailto:contactus@leadingagevirginia.org)



4201 Dominion Blvd, STE 100, Glen Allen, VA 23060



[www.leadingagevirginia.org](http://www.leadingagevirginia.org)

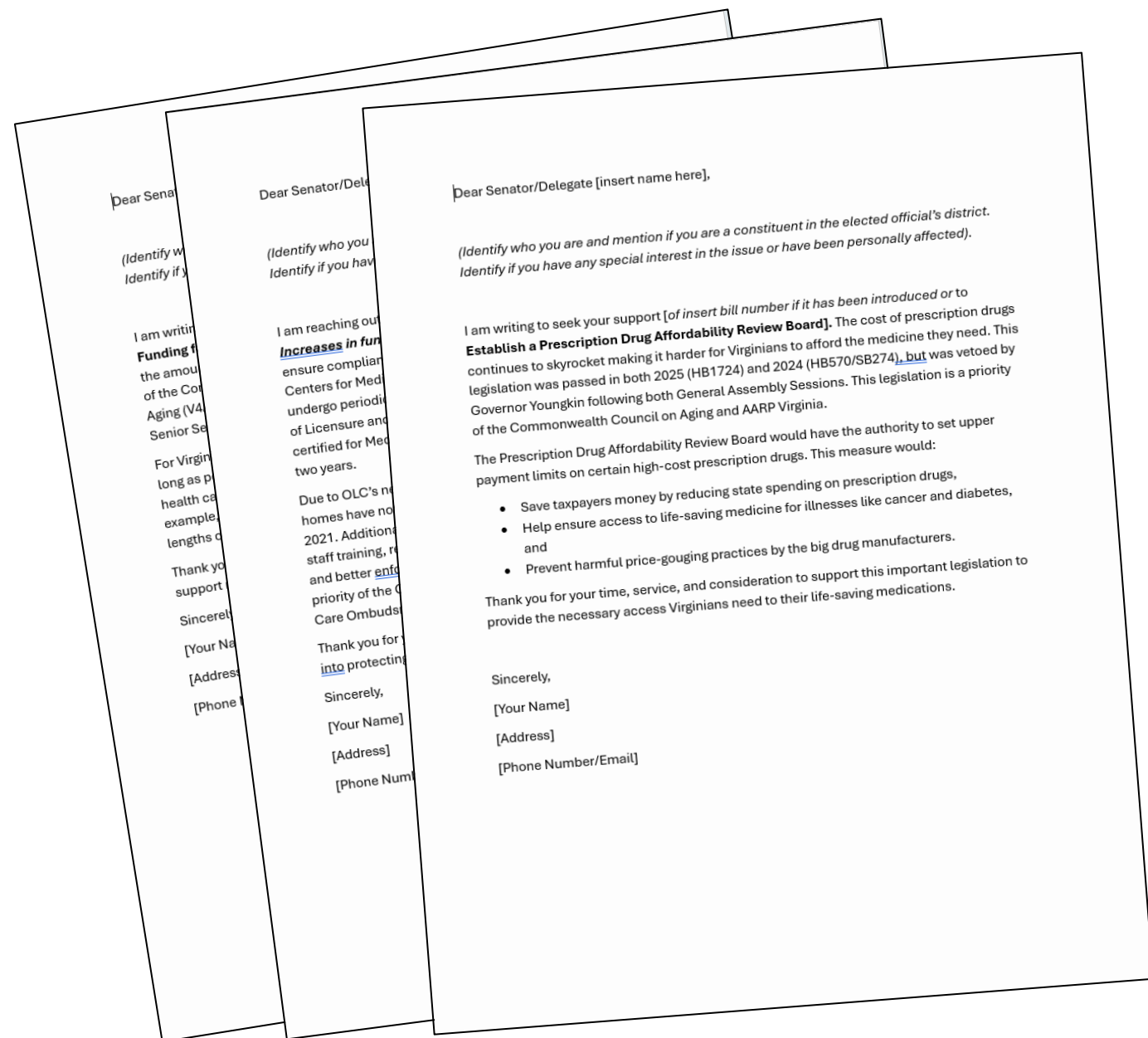


**Dana Parsons**

Vice President &  
Legislative Counsel



# Call to Action



Sample Letters of Support



## COMMONWEALTH COUNCIL ON AGING 2026 Legislative Recommendations

- Increase Funding for Home and Community-Based Services Through Area Agencies on Aging
- Increase Funding for the Nursing Home Inspection and Enforcement Process
- Establish a Prescription Drug Affordability Review Board
- Strengthen Nursing Home Transparency, Data, and Oversight
- Increase Funding of the Statewide Long Term Care Ombudsman Program
- Increase Funding for Public Guardianship Program Slots
- Provide State General Funds for the Ongoing Operations of the Virginia Memory Project
- Extend the Sunset for the Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders Commission
- Increase Funding for No Wrong Door’s Statewide Resource Database

### About the Commonwealth Council on Aging (CCOA)

Established pursuant to §§ 51.5-127 and 51.5-128 of the Code of Virginia, the CCOA promotes an efficient, coordinated approach by state government to meeting the needs of older Virginians. The CCOA supports communities that are accessible, livable, age-friendly, and promote independence. For more information, contact [ccoa@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:ccoa@dars.virginia.gov) or 804-910-5803 or visit [vda.virginia.gov/boardsandcouncils](http://vda.virginia.gov/boardsandcouncils)

CCOA Postcard

# Thank You!



**VCU** College of Health  
Professions

**Gerontology and the Virginia Center on Aging**

**Virginia Center on Aging**

***[www.vcoa.chp.vcu.edu](http://www.vcoa.chp.vcu.edu)***

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