

United States Senate

April 22, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman,
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health, and Human Services, Education
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member,
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

As you work on the fiscal year (FY) 2023 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill, we ask that you provide adequate funding for the Medicare State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). We thank you for your leadership and your efforts in securing modest but much-needed increases for the program in FY 2022. SHIP provides essential assistance to seniors as well as people with disabilities in accessing their earned Medicare benefits. Even maintaining level funding at a time when the number of older Americans is growing by 10,000 a day means that SHIPs would be limited in their ability to meet ongoing needs. We urge you to support these vital services by investing in SHIP at no less than \$79.5 million in the FY 2023 bill.

SHIPs provide older Americans, people with disabilities, and their families with unbiased, cost-free, and personalized information to help them navigate Medicare enrollment and obtain benefits. The average Medicare beneficiary must choose between 60 Medicare plan options each year. They have difficulty comparing plan benefits and making a selection that takes into account all the factors that impacts out of pocket costs and network access. Without the independent counseling and assistance that SHIPs provide, seniors and people with disabilities may make choices that are not right for them, leaving them with high out-of-pocket costs and limited access. Our offices know that Medicare is often confusing to our constituents, and we have relied on SHIPs to help provide them with the answers they need.

SHIPs operate in every state, territory, and the District of Columbia. They provide enrollment clinics, “Welcome to Medicare” events, information seminars, and one-on-one counseling, all of which helps seniors and people with disabilities to choose wisely and, once they do, to navigate Medicare’s benefit and appeals processes to get the most out of their hard-earned Medicare benefits. SHIPs were also crucial in helping beneficiaries learn to navigate the new Medicare plan finder tool, explaining the new Medicare supplemental benefits and changes in consumer protections such as special enrollment periods.

If the investment in SHIP had kept pace with the growth in the older adult population and inflation over the past decade, it would exceed \$79.5 million. A strong funding level is crucial for allowing over 2,200 local sites and nearly 11,500 SHIP staff and volunteer counselors continue to provide needed services to current beneficiaries.

Thank you for considering our request as you continue work on the FY 2023 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



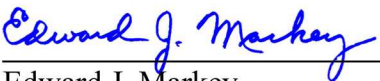
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United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
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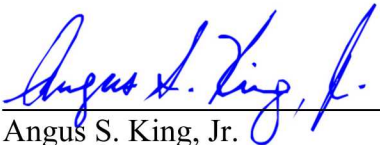
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United States Senator



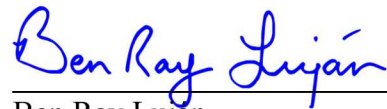
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



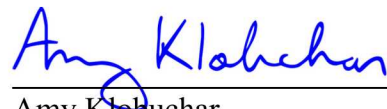
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Elizabeth Warren
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