

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

March 19, 2018

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS and Education
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa D. DeLauro
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS and Education
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you work on the FY2019 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill, we ask that you provide adequate funding for two programs that are essential to our senior constituents: the Medicare State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). SHIP provides essential assistance to seniors as well as people with disabilities in accessing their earned Medicare benefits, while the SCSEP job training program is critical for low-income individuals 55 years and older who need to learn 21st century employment skills. Even maintaining level funding at a time when the number of older Americans is growing by 10,000 a day means that SHIP and SCSEP would be limited in their ability to meet ongoing needs. While we support funding SHIP at \$52.1 million and SCSEP at \$463.8 million in FY2019, we also strongly urge you to reject any proposal to cut or eliminate funding for SHIP and SCSEP.

State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)

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. People on Medicare can choose among plan options each year, plans that may look similar but whose differences could have significant impacts on cost-sharing 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 that helps seniors and people with disabilities choose wisely and, once they do, navigate Medicare’s benefit and appeals processes to get the most out of their hard-earned Medicare benefits. In 2018, SHIPs will also help explain the process of receiving new Medicare cards and changes in consumer protections such as special enrollment periods.

A funding level of \$52.1 million – less than a dollar for every person enrolled in Medicare – is an invaluable investment that will let the 12,000 SHIP staff and volunteer counselors continue to provide needed services.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

SCSEP is the only federal job training program targeted at low-income individuals 55 years old and older. SCSEP assists 67,000 older workers, placing them in part-time community service assignments where they are trained in the 21st century skills they need to transition to unsubsidized employment. Participants are diverse. In FY2016, 65% were women, 21% had at least one disability, 34% were 65 or older, 27% lived in rural areas, and 12% were veterans or military spouses. Through SCSEP employment, participants develop new skills and contribute to their communities by working in schools, hospitals, senior centers and other non-profit facilities.

In a period of retirement insecurity, more and more older Americans are finding it necessary to return or remain in the workforce, yet many are unable to find employment. SCSEP not only helps its participants learn the skills and gain the confidence they need to succeed but provides the valuable information needed to develop best practice models for older workers. It is cost effective since administrative expenses are capped at 13.5% and 75% of total funds must be spent on wages and benefits to participants. An October 2017 study by the Urban Institute, “The Role of SCSEP in Workforce Training for Low-Income Older Workers,” found that “the benefits of SCSEP outweigh the costs,” with a net gain of \$2,873 on average per participant in wages in the first year of unsubsidized employment.

We believe that SCSEP is an important way to help low-income older Americans become economically self-sufficient, and we strongly encourage a funding level of at least \$463.8 million (the level authorized by Congress).

Thank you for considering our request as you continue work on the FY2019 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,



JAN SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress



DORIS MATSUI
Member of Congress



TED DEUTCH
Member of Congress



DEBBIE DINGELL
Member of Congress

Michelle Lujan Grisham

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin

JAMIE RASKIN
Member of Congress

Charlie Crist

CHARLIE CRIST
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragan

NANETTE DIAZ BARRAGÁN
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici

SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress

Rob A. Brady

ROBERT A. BRADY
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor

KATHY CASTOR
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline

DAVID N. CICILLINE
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke

YVETTE D. CLARKE
Member of Congress

Jim Costa

JIM COSTA
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney

JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis

DANNY K. DAVIS
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFAZIO

PETER A. DeFAZIO
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette

DIANA DeGETTE
Member of Congress

Keith Ellison

KEITH ELLISON
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat

ADRIANO ESPAILLAT
Member of Congress



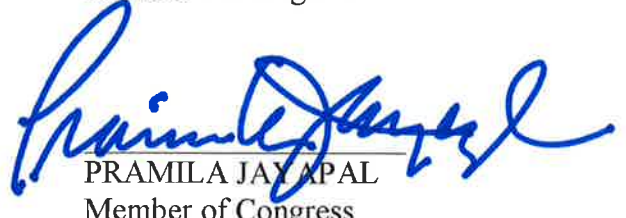
TULSI GABBARD
Member of Congress



JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress



RAUL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress



PRAMILA JAYAPAL
Member of Congress



WILLIAM R. KEATING
Member of Congress



RON KIND
Member of Congress



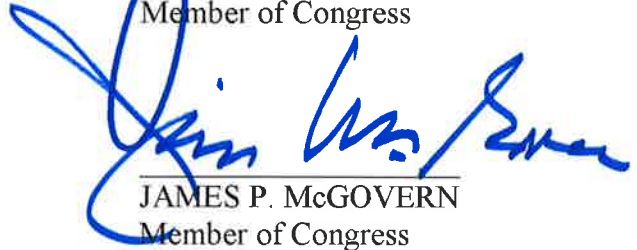
RICK LARSEN
Member of Congress



JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress



SANDER M. LEVIN
Member of Congress



JAMES P. McGOVERN
Member of Congress



SETH MOULTON
Member of Congress



ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress



CHELLIE PINGREE
Member of Congress



JACKY ROSEN
Member of Congress



GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN
Member of Congress



JOHN P. SARBANES
Member of Congress

Carol Shea-Porter

CAROL SHEA-PORTER
Member of Congress

Peter Welch

PETER WELCH
Member of Congress

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger

C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier

JACKIE SPEIER
Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi

THOMAS R. SUOZZI
Member of Congress