

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chair, LHHS Subcommittee
Senate Appropriations Committee
136 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, LHHS Subcommittee
Senate Appropriations Committee
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray,


As you begin work on the FY 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, we urge you to include at least \$52.1 million for the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). This will allow SHIPs to continue their important role in serving as a trusted source of independent advice that helps seniors, people with disabilities and their families navigate Medicare, choose the plans that work best for them, and reduce their out-of-pocket costs.

State Health Insurance Assistance Programs operate in every state, territory and the District of Columbia. SHIPs provide essential information through enrollment clinics, "Welcome to Medicare" events, and informational seminars. With 3,300 state and local offices, they provide free one-on-one, personalized, and unbiased counseling to help individuals understand the range of options they face and get the most of their Medicare benefits. Last year, SHIPs assisted 7 million Medicare beneficiaries. At its current funding level of \$49.1 million - less than a dollar for every person enrolled in Medicare - it is critical that we at least restore funding to the FY 2016 level of \$52.1 million as more and more Americans become eligible for Medicare.

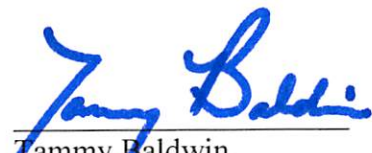
We all have constituents trying to decide which Part D prescription drug plan would best meet their needs or asking for help in comparing Medicare Advantage plans and provider networks. They frequently contact our offices to ask how to report suspected fraud, appeal a plan decision or obtain low-income assistance. In 2018, SHIPS will also help explain the process of receiving new Medicare cards and changes in consumer protections such as special enrollment periods. SHIPs are a critical source of information for our constituents. With 10,000 Americans turning 65 and qualifying for Medicare every day, we should be expanding the ability of SHIPs to meet growing needs, not eliminating their ability to serve those who need assistance.

We ask that you protect this critical program and support the 10,000 Americans turning 65 and qualifying for Medicare every day by providing at least \$52.1 million in FY 2019 for the SHIP program. We thank you for your consideration of this request.

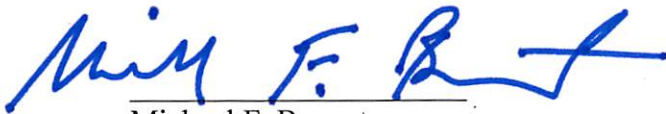
Sincerely,



Christopher Murphy
United States Senator



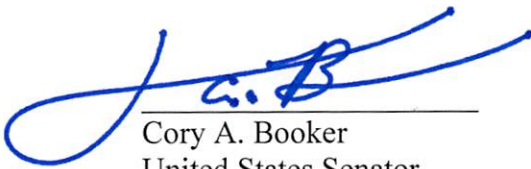
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



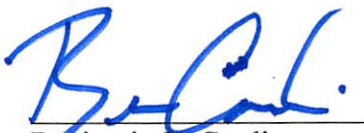
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



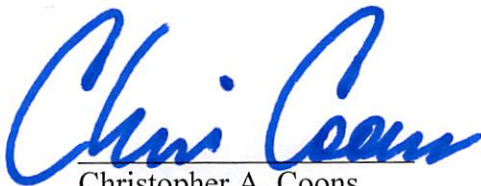
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



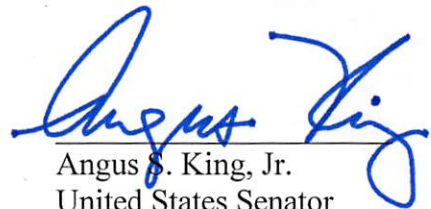
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



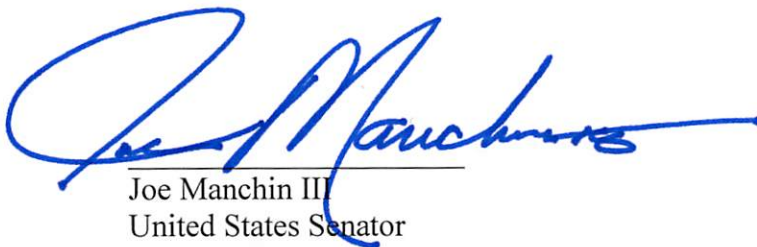
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



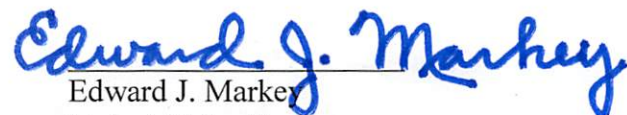
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



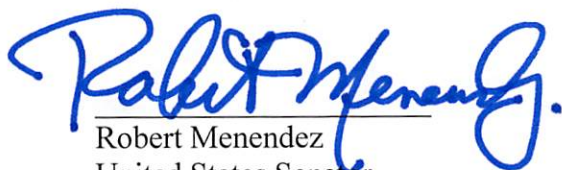
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



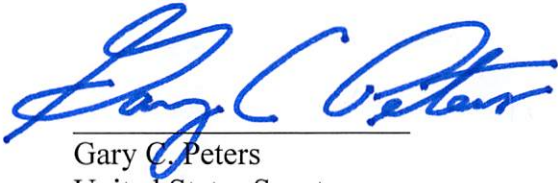
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



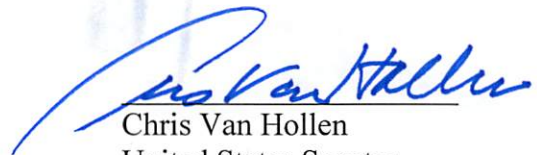
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



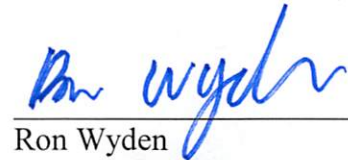
Jon Tester
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator