

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



RANKING MEMBER *Special Committee on Aging*

TRUMP BUDGET ELIMINATES KEY MEDICARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Ensuring Seniors Access to Free and Unbiased Medicare Counseling is Critical

The State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) supports Medicare beneficiaries, their families and caregivers, by providing information, counseling, and assistance with enrollment in Medicare. Approximately 55 million seniors and persons with disabilities are enrolled in Medicare, and SHIP provides assistance, free of charge, to help navigate the complex Medicare system.¹ In 2016 alone, over 14,000 SHIP counselors connected with more than 6.2 million individuals.²

❖ How SHIP Works

Funded through the federal U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, SHIP counselors are located in all 50 states and four U.S. territories. These counselors provide personalized one-on-one counseling in person, by phone, online, or via email. SHIPs also organize community education events and widely disseminate information on Medicare coverage and benefits. SHIP counselors are trained and certified to help individuals, families, and caregivers make informed health care decisions.

❖ How SHIP Benefits Seniors

SHIP counselors are a critical resource to Medicare beneficiaries, empowering individuals to make well informed health care decisions that fit their needs and budget. Trained counselors help individuals navigate Medicare enrollment, compare Medicare Supplemental (Medigap) policies, provide information on how long term care insurance works in conjunction with Medicare, and refer beneficiaries to other agencies like the Social Security Administration and Medicaid where appropriate. A major focus of SHIP education has been enrollment in prescription drug coverage and programs that help beneficiaries with limited income pay for their health care such as the Medicare prescription drug low-income subsidy (LIS) program and the Medicare Savings Program (MSP).³ These efforts help to ensure that the most needy and at-risk beneficiaries have the support to navigate the growing complexities of the Medicare system.

SHIP in Action

Mary, an 85-year old grandmother from Southwest Pennsylvania, was paying \$600 every two months for a Medigap policy and struggling with everyday expenses. Concerned, Mary's granddaughter contacted a local SHIP counselor to discuss options. The SHIP counselor helped Mary understand her coverage and determined that because she was covered by both Medicare and Medicaid, Mary didn't need a Medigap policy. Mary now saves her \$600 because of the help of a SHIP counselor.

The Trump Budget Threatens SHIP Resources

The FY2018 budget proposed by the Trump Administration puts funding for the SHIP program at risk, threatening to eliminate more than \$52 million in discretionary funding for SHIP activities. Eliminating the program means Pennsylvania would lose \$2 million in funding for the APPRISE program, the name of the SHIP program in Pennsylvania. Without funding, thousands of Pennsylvanians would lose the access to SHIP services. The number of Medicare beneficiaries is growing and SHIP counselors provide essential support.⁴ A loss of funding for SHIP programs would hurt Pennsylvanians and leave millions without access to free and impartial Medicare counseling.

¹ Total Number of Medicare Beneficiaries. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. <http://kff.org/medicare/state-indicator/total-medicare-beneficiaries>

² State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). Congressional Research Service.

<http://www.crs.gov/Reports/pdf/IF10623?source=search&guid=288e0f8a89974dabbd43051ce89bb30&index=0>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Funding for Medicare State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs). Nacional Council on Aging. <https://www.ncoa.org/resources/ncoa-2017-issue-brief-medicare-state-health-insurance-assistance-program-ship/>

**Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Community Living
State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)
FY2018 Discretionary State Formula Grants⁵**

State/Territory	FY2017 Annualized CR
Alabama	890,068
Alaska	238,504
Arizona	882,416
Arkansas	629,418
California	4,537,879
Colorado	631,922
Connecticut	566,901
Delaware	211,033
District of Columbia	160,369
Florida	2,901,082
Georgia	1,202,653
Hawaii	260,806
Idaho	403,652
Illinois	1,590,875
Indiana	911,630
Iowa	718,523
Kansas	576,778
Kentucky	881,635
Louisiana	692,306
Maine	453,350
Maryland	772,326
Massachusetts	984,179
Michigan	1,515,768
Minnesota	970,252
Mississippi	621,721
Missouri	960,686
Montana	580,990
Nebraska	433,589
Nevada	429,330
New Hampshire	297,717
New Jersey	1,091,249
New Mexico	450,327
New York	2,462,096
North Carolina	1,546,292
North Dakota	261,644
Ohio	1,831,383
Oklahoma	635,232
Oregon	606,481
Pennsylvania	2,061,007
Rhode island	280,863
South Carolina	799,245
South Dakota	326,735
Tennessee	1,123,065
Texas	2,743,941
Utah	369,617
Vermont	251,326
Virginia	1,049,260
Washington	924,104
West Virginia	490,082
Wisconsin	950,432
Wyoming	302,781
Guam	50,000
Puerto Rico	863,440
Virgin Islands	50,000

⁵ Congressional Budget Justification, State Health Insurance Assistance Programs, Fiscal Year 2018. Department of Health and Human Services. p. 198.
<https://www.acl.gov/sites/default/files/about-acl/2017-05/FY%202018%20ACL%20Budget%20Congressional%20Justification%20v2.pdf>