



Support Medicare SHIP & Senior Community Service Employment Programs

TO SIGN ON, PLEASE FILL OUT [THIS FORM](#) BY COB **FRIDAY, APRIL 16th**
****Programmatic Requests****

Dear Colleague:

The leadership of the House Democratic Caucus Task Force on Aging and Families (TFAF) would like to invite you to join us in requiring funding for two programs that serve our older constituents throughout the country: the Medicare State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).

SHIPs provide free, unbiased advice to help older Americans, people with disabilities, and their families to navigate the Medicare enrollment process and select options and benefits that best meet their needs. The current funding level of \$52.1 million reflects less than a dollar for every person enrolled in Medicare, but has been crucial for allowing over 16,000 SHIP staff and volunteer counselors to continue to provide invaluable services through one-on-one counseling, “Welcome to Medicare” events, and seminars. **We are recommending a funding level of at least \$79.5 million to reflect an investment in SHIP that keeps pace with the growth in the older adult population and inflation over the past decade.**

SCSEP is the only federal job training program targeted to help low-income individuals 55 years of age and older learn the skills and on-the-job experience they need to transition into unsubsidized employment. Two million people over age 55 were unemployed in January, according to an analysis of federal data published by the AARP Public Policy Institute. They accounted for roughly 1 in 5 jobless Americans. SCSEP is essential in today’s period of retirement insecurity, and is particularly important for women, people with disabilities, those in rural areas, and veterans seeking employment, particularly as they struggle with long-term unemployment at greater numbers during the pandemic. **Our request is that SCSEP be funded at its \$480.9 million authorized level.**

If you would like to join us on the attached letter please fill out [this form](#) by **COB Friday, April 16**. If you have any questions, please contact Christina McCauley (Matsui, Christina.McCauley@mail.house.gov) or Gidget Benitez (Schakowsky, Gidget.Benitez@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,

JAN SCHAKOWSKY, Co-Chair, Task Force on Aging and Families
DORIS MATSUI, Co-Chair, Task Force on Aging and Families
CONOR LAMB, Co-Chair, Task Force on Aging and Families
TED DEUTCH, Vice Chair, Task Force on Aging and Families
DEBBIE DINGELL, Vice Chair, Task Force on Aging and Families
AYANNA PRESSLEY, Vice Chair, Task Force on Aging and Families

Signers from the 116th Congress: Bonamici, Brown, Carson, Casten, Castor, Cicilline, Cleaver, Davis, DeFazio, Deutch, Dingell, Fudge, Garamendi, Gomez, Hayes, Jayapal, Johnson (GA), Johnson (TX), Keating, Lamb, Larsen, Larson, Lee (NV), Levin, Lynch, Matsui, McGovern, Moulton, Neal, Neguse, Pappas, Pingree, Plaskett, Porter, Pressley, Raskin, Roybal-Allard, Ruppertsberger, Sablan, Sarbanes, Scanlon, Schakowsky, Sewell, Slotkin, Speier, Suozzi, Trone, Underwood, Welch, Yarmuth

FY22 Medicare SHIP & SCSEP Appropriations Letter

Task Force on Aging and Families Sponsors:

JAN SCHAKOWSKY, Co-Chair, Task Force on Aging and Families
DORIS MATSUI, Co-Chair, Task Force on Aging and Families
CONOR LAMB, Co-Chair, Task Force on Aging and Families
TED DEUTCH, Vice Chair, Task Force on Aging and Families
DEBBIE DINGELL, Vice Chair, Task Force on Aging and Families
AYANNA PRESSLEY, Vice Chair, Task Force on Aging and Families

April XX, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
Labor, HHS, Education,
& Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Labor, HHS, Education,
& Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

As you work on the fiscal year (FY) 2022 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).** We thank you for your leadership and your efforts in securing modest but much-needed increases for both programs in FY 2020 and the House-passed FY 2021 bill. SHIP provides essential assistance to seniors as well as people with disabilities in accessing their earned Medicare benefits, while SCSEP on-the-job training plays a critical role in helping unemployed, low-income individuals, 55 years and older, to develop employment-driven skills and relevant work experiences. 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. **We urge you to invest in SHIP at no less than \$79.5 million and SCSEP at no less than \$480.9 million in your FY 2022 bill.**

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. 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 that 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.

The current funding level of \$52.1 million for SHIP amounts to less than a dollar for every person enrolled in Medicare. **If the investment in SHIP had kept pace with the growth in the older adult population and inflation over the past decade, the funding level would be \$79.5 million.** An increase in funding to \$79.5 million for SHIP in FY 22 is crucial for allowing over 2,000 local sites and nearly 16,000 SHIP staff and volunteer counselors to continue to provide needed services to the growing numbers and diversity of Medicare beneficiaries.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

SCSEP is the only federal job training program targeted at unemployed, low-income individuals 55 years old and older. Each year, about 55,000 older adults from every state and congressional district receive part-time, on-the-job training through community service assignments. While SCSEP participants are diverse, including 66 percent women, 12 percent veterans, and 39 percent over age 65, they all enter the program with significant barriers to employment. This includes having a disability (26 percent), being homeless or at-risk of homelessness (63 percent), or living in an area that is rural (25 percent) or has persistent unemployment (19 percent), according to the most recent program year report.¹

Further, according to AARP's analysis of the monthly Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Employment Situation Report², in January two million people over age 55 were unemployed, accounting for roughly one in five jobless Americans. Older workers struggle with long-term unemployment at greater rates and for longer durations than their younger counterparts, especially during economic downturns such as these. An increase in SCSEP funding would increase access to a crucial intervention targeted on older workers most in need, struggling with low-incomes and multiple barriers to employment.

Every older worker in SCSEP increases their economic self-sufficiency, one of the program's two mandated goals, through the paychecks they earn during their community training. While each SCSEP participant enters the program with, on average, three significant barriers to employment, about one in every two SCSEP participants transitions into unsubsidized employment, the program's other mandated goal. Of the thousands who find employment each year, 7 in 10 remained fully employed one year after exiting the program. A recent Urban Institute study, "The Role of SCSEP in Workforce Training for Low-Income Older Workers," found that "the benefits of SCSEP outweigh the costs," with participants earning more in the first year of unsubsidized employment than the program invested in them.³ An earlier independent program evaluation also concluded that, in addition to preparing individuals for employment success, SCSEP was "increasing the overall quality of life of low-income elders who are having difficulty meeting their financial needs."⁴

We believe that SCSEP is an important way to help low-income older Americans become economically self-sufficient, and we strongly encourage you to, at a minimum, fund the program at \$480.9 million the current level called for by Congress in the 2020 bipartisan reauthorization of the *Older Americans Act* (P.L. 116-131).

Thank you for considering our request as you continue work on the FY 2022 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

¹ https://www.doleta.gov/Seniors/html_docs/Docs/PY%2018%20QPR%20final.pdf

² <https://www.aarp.org/ppi/info-2020/employment-data-digest.html>

³ <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/role-scsep-workforce-training-low-income-older-workers>

⁴ <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/evaluation-of-the-senior-community-service-employment-program-scsep-process-and-outcomes-study>