July 10, 2017

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor-HHS& Education  
US House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor-HHS & Education  
US House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you work on the FY2018 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill, we urge you to reject harmful cuts to programs that work to improve the health, financial security, and independence of millions of American seniors, people with disabilities, and their families. Specifically, we want to express our deep disappointment with the Trump Administration’s recommendation to eliminate funding for the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). We urge you to reject those proposals and, instead, at least maintain funding for these critical initiatives.

State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)

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 that help beneficiaries navigate Medicare, choose the plans that work best for them, and reduce their out-of-pocket costs. Older Americans and people with disabilities and their families rely on SHIPs, and our staff frequently refers constituents to SHIPs for assistance.

Through 3,300 state and local offices, more than 12,000 SHIP staff and volunteer counselors provide free one-on-one, personalized, and unbiased counseling to help millions of Americans understand the range of options they face and get the most out of their hard-earned Medicare benefits. At its current funding level of $47.1 million—less than a dollar for every person enrolled in Medicare—it is an invaluable resource that must be maintained.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

The Senior Community Service Employment Program helps address the growing need of job training and labor force development for low-income Americans 55 and older who want to continue living independent and productive lives. The SCSEP currently serves 65,000 older workers across the country, helping older workers both develop new skills and contribute to their communities by working in schools, hospitals, senior centers, and other non-profit facilities. Older Americans often struggle to find jobs when unemployed, taking 40 weeks on average
compared to 24 weeks for their younger counterparts. This period of long-term unemployment can have disastrous effects, both financially and emotionally. Coupled with a looming retirement savings crisis, where a majority of older Americans do not have nearly enough saved for retirement, it is crucial that we allow this program to continue as a lifeline for these workers.

Congress designed SCSEP to foster individual economic self-sufficiency and promote employment of SCSEP participants into unsubsidized jobs. As required by the Older Americans Act, 75 percent of SCSEP funds are used for wages for participants, who include veterans, individuals with disabilities, rural residents, and other most-in-need older Americans. Two-thirds of participants are women. Cuts to this program therefore directly harm these economically vulnerable Americans.

Again, we urge you to reject President Trump’s proposal to slash SHIP and SCSEP funding. We thank you for your attention to our request.

Sincerely,

Jan Schakowsky
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Ted Deutch
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Doris Matsui
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Jamie Raskin
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Joyce Beatty
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Debbie Dingell
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro
SHIP and SCSEP Appropriations
July 10, 2017
Page 3

Michelle Lujan Grisham
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

John Conyers, Jr.
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Sander Levin
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Peter A. DeFazio
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Eleanor Holmes Norton
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Lloyd Doggett
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Sheila Jackson Lee
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Danny K. Davis
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

James P. McGovern
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Barbara Lee
MEMBER OF CONGRESS