Dear Chairmen Rogers and Cole and Ranking Members Lowey and DeLauro:

We are writing to express our strong support for the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and our deep disappointment with the Senate Appropriations Committee’s vote to eliminate its funding. We urge you to reject that decision, which would take away 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 $52.1 million – less than a dollar for every person enrolled in Medicare – it is an invaluable resource that must be maintained.

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. 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.
Again, we urge you to reject the Senate action and to maintain robust support for SHIPs. We thank you for your attention to our request.

Xavier Becerra  
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

Theodore E. Deutch  
Member of Congress

Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress

Sander M. Levin  
Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen  
Member of Congress

Pete Aguilar  
Member of Congress

Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress
Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress

Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress

John Garamendi
Member of Congress
John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress

Brad Ashford
Member of Congress

Patrick E. Murphy
Member of Congress