



Legislative Alert

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ACTION NEEDED: Contact your U.S. Representative to let him/her know how SHIP funding is used in WI and why it so important to invest in the program, not eliminate it!

June 17, 2016

Last week, the **U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee introduced a budget** for federal fiscal year (FY) 2017 **cutting all funding (\$52.1 million) for the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP).**

The State of Wisconsin currently receives about \$1 million annually through the federal SHIP grant. This funding is used to support the:

- Toll-free statewide Medigap Helpline and Medigap Part D and Prescription Drug Helpline operated by the Board on Aging and Long Term Care (BOALTC);
- Toll-free statewide Medicare Part D Helpline operated by Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) for people with disabilities and their families or guardians;
- Elder Healthcare Advocate (an attorney specializing in eligibility and transitions for BadgerCare Plus, the Health Insurance Marketplace and Medicare) at the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR); and
- Elder Benefit Specialist services in 72 counties and 11 tribes.

In 2015, **staff** working in these programs and services **responded to over 95,000 contacts** with Medicare beneficiaries **and conducted over 2,600 public outreach events** during that same period. Over 5,100 callers were referred to a Wisconsin SHIP counselor by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)/1-800-MEDICARE or medicare.gov, and another 13,000 were referred from another agency such as Social Security. Many of these services would not be possible without SHIP funding and certainly not at the levels currently provided. In fact, in order to keep pace with inflation and the increasing number of Medicare beneficiaries, funding at the federal level would need to increase from \$52.1 million to \$66.6 million.

The House Appropriations Subcommittee has not yet taken action, but is likely to do so in the coming days, possibly **before June 24.**

IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED: Contact your U.S. Representative (click on your Representative's name to link directly to a "contact" button) **to educate him/her on how SHIP funding is used in Wisconsin and the program's important role in helping Medicare beneficiaries.** Wisconsin does not have any Representatives on the House Appropriations Committee; however, contacts are still important. **Encourage your Representative to reach out to their colleagues on the Appropriations Committee and ask them to reject the Senate's proposal to eliminate funding and to increase their investment in SHIP,** which helps older adults and people with disabilities. This will prevent millions of Americans who need help navigating the Medicare programs and comparing coverage options from being left stranded.

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