

**From:** Danny Varat  
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**Date:** 8/12/2017 9:43:56 AM  
**Subject:** Washington Night Question

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Hey, here's the draft of the letter, and I think contains enough to formulate the question. I'll send along the final when it goes out. Thanks again

DV

South Carolina is home to over 975,000 Medicare beneficiaries, and the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) is a main source for one-on-one counseling to help seniors understand their choices for Medicare plans and avoid telemarketing and other scams. The SHIP program is administered through the Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging, with trained counselors and volunteers advising seniors at the 10 regional Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs).

Last year, the statewide aging network provided insurance counseling to 34,529 seniors and reached an additional 30,328 seniors through outreach events. One AAA Director noted that during open enrollment, SHIP counselors saved over one million dollars in premiums and copayments for seniors in her region.

SHIP serves as a critical resource of Medicare expertise for an extensive network of local, state and federal organizations. Most federal, local and state agencies and Congressional representatives and staff refer beneficiaries to SHIP counselors here in South Carolina.

The House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education eliminated funding for the SHIP program in the FY2018 budget, and without adequate funding, South Carolina will lose its SHIP counselors. Seniors will lose counseling that helps them avoid unscrupulous telemarketers and other scammers. I support restoring this program in the budget.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) in South Carolina.

Sincerely,

Kevin L. Bryant  
Lieutenant Governor