**Preserve Funding for SHIPs**

The Senate Appropriations Committee’s and the President’s budgets propose a 100% cut in funding for State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIP). This would have a devastating impact on **NCSHIIP**, the **North Carolina** **Seniors’ Health Insurance Information Program** and its ability to assist the state’s 1.8 million Medicare beneficiaries. This potential cut comes at a time when the number of people eligible for Medicare is growing and the Medicare program is becoming increasingly complex. Not funding this program may eliminate the best and most reliable free and local resource that Medicare beneficiaries have in North Carolina. Consumers would be forced to utilize 1-800-MEDICARE which is not equipped to handle the call volume or to seek assistance from other sources who may not be reliable.

The House of Representatives is scheduled to debate funding for Health and Human Services programs in the next week or so. Funding for SHIIPs would be included in these budget debates. If the House does not fund this program it may be very difficult to get funding from any other source, therefore the future of this program would be uncertain.

Please help us to not let this happen!

**NCSHIIP Activities in 2016:**

* **Helped North Carolina Medicare beneficiaries save $44.3 million.**
* **Counseled more than 105,000 Medicare beneficiaries.**
* Served almost **21,000** Medicare beneficiaries with disabilities.
* Counseled more than **29,000** beneficiaries with incomes below 150% of federal poverty level.

**NCSHIIP is:**

* **Unique.** NCSHIIP is the only organization in the state that provides unbiased, accurate, highly-personalized one-on-one counseling about Medicare by phone and in-person in all 100 counties in North Carolina.
* **Effective.** NCSHIIP helped save North Carolinians more than **$44.3 million** on Medicare coverage and prescription drugs in 2016 alone. **This is close to the $52 million that is appropriated for all SHIPs nationwide** that is being proposed for elimination in the Senate’s and the President’s Budgets.
* **Cost-efficient.** NCSHIIP uses a small paid staff and a network of approximately 1,000 trained volunteer counselors to meet the needs of North Carolina’s 1.8 million Medicare beneficiaries.
* **Dependable.** Local, state and federal agencies, members of the state legislature, members of Congress and their staff, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Social Security Administration and other sources routinely refer beneficiaries to NCSHIIP. Beneficiaries often need help that cannot be provided by 1-800-Medicare or through online or printed materials.

With eliminated federal funding, NCSHIIP would be severely impacted and would not be able to provide the same high level of service, and partner agencies will have to find new ways to help beneficiaries who need Medicare information and counseling.