



## BARNSTABLE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

SUPERIOR COURTHOUSE  
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IN 1989

SHEILA R. LYONS  
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MARK R. FOREST  
Yarmouth

January 10, 2023

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senate  
309 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510  
The Honorable Edward Markey  
United States Senate  
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Keating  
United States House of Representatives  
2351 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington DC 20515.

Dear Senators Warren and Markey and Congressman Keating:

Continued funding for Medicare outreach and enrollment assistance to low-income beneficiaries is in jeopardy, even though it has been extended eleven (11) times with bipartisan support over the past fifteen (15) years and received unanimous bipartisan support in a recent Senate committee vote. Cape Cod and the Islands host one of thirteen (13) Regional SHINE programs in Massachusetts. We strongly urge you to extend the \$50 million in annual funding for this important expiring outreach to low-income seniors. **The funding does not raise costs by expanding benefits. It helps vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities on Medicare continue to receive the assistance for which they are already eligible.**

This outreach funding is more important than ever since the end of the COVID Public Health Emergency protections pushed many low-income older adults off Medicaid. In addition, help is needed to sign up for improved low-income prescription drug coverage and to find and


enroll often difficult to reach seniors in rural areas. **Barnstable County has seen a major increase in individuals seeking assistance since April 2023 and SHINE funds are crucial to our ability to assist residents of Cape Cod and the Islands maintain cost-effective health insurance.**

Since 2012, the regional SHINE office for Cape Cod and the Islands has been administered within the Barnstable County Department of Human Services. In collaboration with our partners at both the state and federal level, two (2) full-time staff provide training, development, and support to almost seventy (70) volunteer counselors, who are deployed to Councils on Aging and Senior Centers throughout Cape Cod and the Islands to provide counseling and assistance to residents. **Each year, the Barnstable County SHINE Program serves between 5,000 and 6,000 individuals, saving constituents hundreds of thousands of dollars and, more importantly, increasing equitable access to healthcare coverage for marginalized populations.**

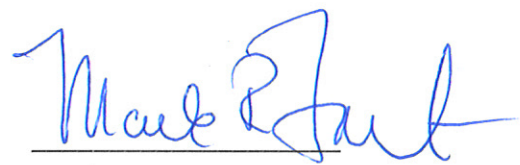
Nationally, this funding contributed to almost doubling the number of low-income program enrollees over the past 15 years, estimates indicate that about 3 million eligible beneficiaries are still not receiving Extra Help to help pay their prescription drug costs. No one on Medicare should have to skip a doctor's visit or medication dose because of cost. We are asking you to continue to support this important work on behalf of older adults in need.

We know we can count on your support to help low-income Medicare beneficiaries to receive the assistance they are eligible for to enable them to afford the health care they need. Please do everything you can to ensure Congress provides this funding as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

  
Ronald Bergstrom

  
Sheila Lyons

  
Mark Forest

Barnstable County Board of Regional Commissioners