



Leadership Council  
of Aging Organizations

***Richard J. Fiesta, Chair***

January 12, 2024

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Jeffries:

I am writing on behalf of the 68-member [Leadership Council of Aging Organizations](#) to urge Congress to extend critically important funding for Medicare low-income beneficiary outreach and enrollment efforts. This program helps struggling near-and-below poverty older adults to afford needed prescription drugs, doctor visits and other essential services, but funding authority expired October 1.

Without continued funding for outreach and education by State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs), Area Agencies on Aging, and other community-based organizations, millions of low-income beneficiaries will not receive the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) and Part D Low-Income Subsidy (LIS) Extra Help they are eligible for, and will be unable to afford the care they need as out-of-pocket health costs continue to rise.

Many beneficiaries need help navigating the complex system and understanding and applying for benefits currently available, which is why this program is so critical. For example, according to the Administration for Community Living (ACL), from September 2020 through August 2023, state and local partner organizations assisted almost 3 million beneficiaries at over 60,000 group outreach events and conducted about 3.2 million one-on-one contacts with Medicare beneficiaries, their families, or caregivers.

Over the past 15 years, the program has been extended 11 times with bipartisan support, and annual funding is a relatively modest \$50 million. Most recently, the Senate Finance Committee included this Medicare extender in their health proposal (S. 3430) which received unanimous, bipartisan support.

Continued funding is particularly important to respond to the rapidly growing need for assistance, given that an estimated 10,000 Americans turn 65 every day, and to address challenges under the Medicaid unwinding as dual eligibles lose their Medicaid eligibility. It is

also necessary to be able to meet the needs of beneficiaries living in rural areas where it is harder to find and enroll seniors due to the often large service areas, low population density, high travel costs and lack of public transportation.

We strongly urge you to extend this high-priority program for low-income Medicare beneficiaries as soon as possible. We thank you in advance for your attention to this critical issue and for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard J. Fiesta". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping tail on the "t".

Richard J. Fiesta