

Dear [Senator/Representative LAST NAME]:

On behalf of the Milwaukee County Commission on Aging, I am writing to alert you to the upcoming December 31, 2024 deadline to continue funding the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act's (MIPPA) low-income outreach and assistance program. The Milwaukee County Area Agency on Aging relies on these important programs to conduct targeted outreach to low-income Medicare beneficiaries who are not yet enrolled in Medicare programs designed to save them money.

The MIPPA low-income outreach and assistance program provides essential funding to Milwaukee County and other Area Agencies on Aging, State Health Insurance Programs (SHIPs) and Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) around the country. The program, administered at the federal level by the U.S. Administration for Community Living, was funded earlier this year through December 31, 2024, and it is crucial that this funding extend into 2025 and beyond.

From 2022-2023, MIPPA programs helped 5.7 million Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers to receive help with access to low-income benefits, alongside another 3.6 million who used online services to find a program. There are an estimated 20.5 million Medicare beneficiaries in America who are eligible for Medicare Savings Programs who are not yet enrolled. MIPPA needs funding to ensure that we can reach those eligible beneficiaries in Milwaukee County.

Over the years, MIPPA funding has provided Milwaukee County the ability to impact thousands of residents and connect them with vital services to improve their health and wellbeing. In 2024, Milwaukee County benefits specialists are on track to work with more than 125 individuals on MIPPA-related concerns, including Part D Extra Help and other Medicare Savings Programs. In 2024, we will conduct 24 community outreach presentations to provide education on Medicare enrollment, including bilingual sessions in English and Spanish, sessions targeted to Native Americans, and sessions across Milwaukee County's 19 municipalities. As we near the end of 2024, organizations have already started reaching out to request these community outreach sessions at their location in 2025, demonstrating the value of this programming to our residents.

Our MIPPA funding also supports a program unique to Milwaukee County: an Elder Benefits Specialist position that focuses solely on Medicare casework and outreach. Because of the extremely high need for Medicare assistance in Milwaukee County, and the incidence of low-income individuals that require additional help, this position provides critical support to our community. Through group outreach and individual counseling, our benefits specialist ensures that residents in the greatest economic and social need can access the Medicare programs that are designed to support them. Discontinuation of the MIPPA program would be detrimental to Milwaukee County.

It is especially crucial to provide funding to these programs as they help negative predatory practices undertaken by private insurers who seek to take advantage of vulnerable older adults. Our staff can help provide unbiased, accurate assistance connecting with Medicare Savings Programs, which may be more advantageous for a beneficiary rather than enrollment in other options. However, older adults may easily be led astray by overwhelming marketing campaigns, phone calls, and door-to-door visits that can result in the opposite of what the MIPPA program intends. In addition to supporting the MIPPA program, we hope you can also cut down on harmful Medicare marketing.

Our hope is that you can take action, or speak with your colleagues on the right committees, to ensure that MIPPA is updated and funded as soon as possible or at least included in the next spending bill.

Please feel free to reach out anytime on this or any aging issues of importance to you and your constituents.

Sincerely,

Janice Wilberg, Ph.D.  
Chair, Commission on Aging

Brian Peters  
Legislative Advocacy Officer, Commission on Aging