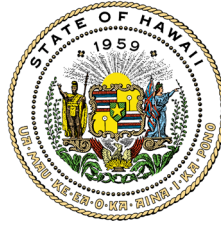


DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII

ELIZABETH A. CHAR, M.D.  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH



CAROLINE CADIRAO  
DIRECTOR

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STATE OF HAWAII  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON AGING  
NO. 1 CAPITOL DISTRICT  
250 SOUTH HOTEL STREET, SUITE 406  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2831

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB2678  
Relating to the Hawaii State Health Insurance Assistance Program**

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
SENATOR JARRETT KEOHOKALOPE, CHAIR  
SENATOR ROSALYN H. BAKER, VICE CHAIR

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION  
SENATOR ROSALYN H. BAKER, CHAIR  
SENATOR STANLEY CHANG, VICE CHAIR

Testimony of Caroline Cadirao  
Director, Executive Office on Aging  
Attached Agency to the Department of Health

Hearing Date: February 10, 2022  
9:30 AM

Room Number: 229  
Via Videoconference

1 **EOA's Position:** The Executive Office on Aging (EOA), an attached agency to the Department  
2 of Health, supports the intent of SB 2678, Relating to the Hawaii State Health Insurance  
3 Assistance Program.

4 **Fiscal Implications:** This measure appropriates state funds to the Hawaii State Health Insurance  
5 Assistance Program (SHIP) for FY22-FY23.

6 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds to SHIP for  
7 operating costs to expand access to important Medicare-related services to Hawaii residents  
8 statewide by recruiting more volunteers and contracting with third party service providers and  
9 staffing consultants. EOA will ensure that third party service providers, including all members of  
10 the governing board, are independent and free from all conflicts of interest.

1 Hawaii SHIP is a volunteer-based program whose mission is to empower, educate, and assist  
2 Medicare-eligible individuals, their families, caregivers, and soon-to-be-retirees through  
3 objective outreach, counseling, and training to make informed health insurance decisions that  
4 optimize access to care and benefits. SHIP is recognized as a reliable, unbiased, and free source  
5 in Hawaii for accurate information on health plans and other related topics such as: Medicare  
6 eligibility/enrollment in Medicare Parts A, B, C, D, Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap)  
7 to prevent lifetime late enrollment penalties; Financial assistance programs: Extra Help,  
8 Medicare Savings Program, and Medicaid eligibility; Medical/drug plan comparisons to include  
9 dental, vision, and hearing coverage and coordination of benefits; Claims/appeals; summary  
10 notice/billing discrepancies; plan terminations; broker/agent misrepresentation.

11 ***SHIP is cost efficient.*** The services provided by SHIP has demonstrated at the national level to  
12 save beneficiaries hundreds of thousands of dollars. For example, Medicare beneficiaries who  
13 chose the least expensive Part D prescription plan available in their region, saved an average of  
14 \$368 per year. In SFY 2021, Hawaii SHIP volunteers and in-kind staff contributed 3,523 hours  
15 valued at over **\$100,194**, based on the 2021 national rate of \$28.44 per hour of volunteer work  
16 (source: Independent Sector Releases New Value of Volunteer Time of \$28.54 Per Hour —  
17 Independent Sector). Volunteers provide one-on-one counseling, presentations to employers and  
18 senior groups, administrative support, training, and distribution of information, and support  
19 community outreach events statewide.

20 ***SHIP needs to expand to meet the growing demand.*** In 2021, Hawaii had 278,077 Medicare  
21 beneficiaries, a figure that continues to grow as the Baby Boomers (1946-1964) become eligible  
22 for Medicare at age 65. However, the number of dedicated staffing positions has not changed  
23 since the inception of the program in 1992. The program employs two full-time equivalent (2.0  
24 FTE) who train and support eighty-four (84) certified Medicare volunteers and in-kind staff  
25 statewide. Compared to other states, Hawaii SHIP has the least number of staff for the largest

1 number of Medicare beneficiaries. The table below compares the total number of full-time  
 2 dedicated staff of other states.

State	# of Medicare beneficiaries	# of FTE
Alaska	105,000	3
Delaware	186,753	5
<b>Hawaii</b>	<b>278,077</b>	<b>2</b>
Montana	209,612	3
North Dakota	121,523	3
Wyoming	109,989	5

3  
 4  
 5  
 6  
 7  
 8  
 9  
 10 Hawaii has the fastest rate of growth of the Medicare population. Additionally, Hawaii SHIP  
 11 increased the number of beneficiaries reached during the past four years (from 1,918 in 2018 to  
 12 2,930 in 2021), yet the program continues to fall below the penetration goal of the total Medicare  
 13 population, as set by the federal funders at 1.83%. or 5,089 individuals. In 2021, Hawaii SHIP's  
 14 penetration rate was 1.05% or 2,930 individuals assisted. Rather than hiring more FTEs, we plan  
 15 to contract with additional third-party service providers and to recruit more volunteers who will  
 16 assist our program to reach beneficiaries and individuals turning age 65.

17 **This proposal is requesting general funds to support the invaluable, unbiased counseling**  
 18 **and educational services that Hawaii SHIP provides to older adults, their families,**  
 19 **caregivers, and soon-to-be retirees. Increased funding will expand access to SHIP services**  
 20 **through volunteers and third-party service providers and enable greater focus to reach**  
 21 **target populations, such as individuals with limited income, limited English proficiency,**  
 22 **and/or rurally isolated with limited access to services and supports.**

23 **Recommendation:** EOA supports the intent of SB2678 provided that its enactment does not  
 24 reduce or replace priorities with the Administration's budget request.

25 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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1-866-295-7282 | Fax: 808-536-2882  
aarp.org/hi | [aarphi@aarp.org](mailto:aarphi@aarp.org) | [twitter.com/AARPHawaii](https://twitter.com/AARPHawaii)  
[facebook.com/AARPHawaii](https://facebook.com/AARPHawaii)

**The State Legislature  
The Senate  
Committee on Health  
Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection  
Thursday, February 10, 2021  
9:30 a.m.**

TO: The Honorable Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair  
The Honorable Rosalyn Baker, Chair

RE: S.B. 2678 Relating to Hawaii State Health Insurance Assistance Program

Aloha Chairs Keohokalole, Baker and Members of the Committees:

My name is Keali'i Lopez and I am the State Director for AARP Hawai'i. AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization that advocates for individuals age 50 and older. We have a membership of nearly 38 million nationwide and over 140,000 in Hawai'i.

AARP Hawai'i supports SB 2678 which appropriates fund to expand the Hawaii State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). SHIP is a vital program that provides valuable information and assistance to new Medicare eligible and current enrollees who are navigating the complex world of Medicare and understanding the different Medicare options that best meet their needs. It is a trusted, unbiased resource of information in which a person can receive one-to-one counseling and education. Currently, SHIP is staffed by only two full time employees who train over eighty dedicated volunteers to provide assistance to the public free of charge. As more Hawaii residents turn age 65 or become Medicare eligible, the demand for assistance and information will significantly increase and require more staff and volunteer support. The public will greatly benefit if SHIP can be expanded to serve Hawaii's growing aging population.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 2678.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keali'i S. Lopez".

Keali'i Lopez, AARP Hawai'i

Representative/Senator Name, Chair  
Representative/Senator Name, Vice Chair  
Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

Sharie Nagatani  
Volunteer with Hawaii State Health Insurance Assistance Program  
94-515 Lumiaina Street, #L103  
Waipahu, HI 96797  
(808) 729-1309

February 9, 2022

Support for HB1825 / SB2678, Relating to the State Health Insurance Assistance Program

Hawaii State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) is a federally funded, volunteer-based program that is administered by the Hawaii State Department of Health, Executive Office on Aging. Hawaii SHIP helps Medicare-eligible individuals, their families and caregivers, and soon-to-be retirees make informed, cost-effective healthcare decisions. This is accomplished through one-on-one counseling sessions, answering questions, and distributing informative brochures at health fairs, and providing Medicare-related presentations. These services are free to the public who contact Hawaii SHIP through the Help Line and website. Volunteers, who provide these important services, are recruited and trained throughout the year to keep up with the changes or updates to Medicare.

As a 2nd-year MSW Graduate student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health, specializing in the area of Gerontology, I was presented with the opportunity to complete the Intro to Medicare Course. A partnership through the Department of Health Executive Office on Aging and the University of Hawaii Center on Aging, the Medicare knowledge that I acquired would be beneficial as I dedicate a career towards working with older adults. The course was affiliated with Hawaii SHIP (State Health Insurance Assistance Program) in which the program guided in developing our Medicare skills and support of our Service Learning Project. The purpose of our Service Learning Project was to assist older adults in our selected partner site organization (i.e. Alu Like, Catholic Charities, Lanakila Multi-Purpose Senior Center, etc.) and assist their members or affiliates in Medicare education, advocacy, or outreach services. Our mission as students of the course was to promote Hawaii SHIP and their services to the community.

In relation to completing the course, I had the privilege of completing my practicum with the program as well. As a student and a volunteer, I experienced the challenges that older adults and their families faced navigating the complexity of the Medicare system. Misleading or misunderstood information could result in costly consequences if their healthcare decisions were poorly made. This contributes to the increasing gap of affordability and access to healthcare coverage in older Americans today.

Hence, I strongly support HB1825 / SB2678, relating to the State Health Insurance Assistance Program, which would provide Hawaii SHIP with much-needed funding to expand access to

important Medicare-related services to Hawaii residents statewide by contracting with third party service providers and staffing consultants.

There are 278,077 Medicare beneficiaries statewide as of 2021. Hawaii SHIP's goal is to assist as many beneficiaries in Hawaii as possible. In 2021, SHIP assisted 2,930 with Medicare counseling and reached 7,701 beneficiaries through outreach presentations and fairs/exhibits. By 2025, SHIP will need to reach 10,000 Medicare beneficiaries which is a drastic increase from SHIP's current capacity.

With more partnerships and volunteers, Hawaii SHIP could provide more outreach and education to Hawaii's residents. I urge the committee to pass HB1825 / SB2678. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

**SB-2678**

Submitted on: 2/8/2022 7:51:14 AM

Testimony for HTH on 2/10/2022 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Tammy Chu	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

Committee on Health: Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair and Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair

Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection: Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair and Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

I support HB1825 / SB2678.

I've spent the majority of my professional career in healthcare working for large and small providers and payers in different parts of the country including Hawaii. I know first hand the types of complexity that exist in the US healthcare system. I personally encountered this complexity when enrolling my husband into Medicare as he turns 65. He was at a total loss with where to start with Medicare. I cannot imagine the challenges, apprehension, and frustration that kupunas and others face navigating the Medicare world. This is what inspired me to join Hawaii SHIP. It is a unique service in that it's the only Hawaii-based organization private or public that provides free, unbiased counseling to those in need of Medicare information. Others are typically insurance agents and brokers who may be knowledgeable but often have a vested interest in certain products.

There were 278,078 Medicare beneficiaries in Hawaii as of 2021. Hawaii SHIP's goal is to assist as many beneficiaries in Hawaii as possible. In 2021, SHIP assisted 2,930 with Medicare counseling and reached 7,701 beneficiaries through outreach presentations and fairs/exhibits. This population will continue to grow and in 2025, SHIP will need to reach at least 10,000 of them which is a drastic increase from SHIP's current capacity.

Hawaii SHIP's service will be critical to provide unbiased, objective information as Medicare complexities are not changing anytime soon. With more partnerships and volunteers, Hawaii SHIP could provide more outreach and education to Hawaii's residents. I urge the committee to pass HB1825 / SB2678. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair  
Senator, Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair  
Committee on Health (HTH)

Senator, Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair  
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair  
Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection (CPN)

Candace Nakamoto  
808-349-2007, [masamiyoung@gmail.com](mailto:masamiyoung@gmail.com)  
2.8.22

#### Support for HB1825 / SB2678, Relating to the State Health Insurance Assistance Program

Hawaii State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) is a federally funded, volunteer-based program that is administered by the Hawaii State Department of Health, Executive Office on Aging. Hawaii SHIP helps Medicare-eligible individuals, their families and caregivers, and soon-to-be retirees make informed, cost-effective healthcare decisions. This is accomplished through one-on-one counseling sessions, answering questions, and distributing informative brochures at health fairs, and providing Medicare-related presentations. These services are free to the public who contact Hawaii SHIP through the Help Line and website. Volunteers, who provide these important services, are recruited and trained throughout the year to keep up with the changes or updates to Medicare.

As a Social Worker in the field of Gerontology, I can see an increased need for services and supports for older adults in Hawaii. With increases to Social Security and Medicare expenditures, coupled with an increase in cost of living. Older adults often find themselves struggling to financially meet their basic needs. Health insurance should be considered a necessity. Older adults are more predisposed to chronic conditions, hospitalizations, and have a higher utilization rate of medical services and prescription medication. Medicare is a complex program which is difficult to navigate for even the most capable. With annual changes, numerous Medicare notices, enrollment periods and penalties it can often be overwhelming. Hawaii SHIP volunteers dedicate their time to personally consult older adults with their existing plan options, questions about current coverage, and identifying potential eligibility for financial assistance. In times of need Hawaii SHIP acts as a beckon on light navigating beneficiaries through the complex tides of Medicare.

Hence, I strongly support HB1825 / SB2678, relating to the State Health Insurance Assistance Program, which would provide Hawaii SHIP with much-needed funding to expand access to important Medicare-related services to Hawaii residents statewide by contracting with third party service providers and staffing consultants.

With more partnerships and volunteers, Hawaii SHIP could provide more outreach and education to Hawaii's residents. I urge the committee to pass HB1825 / SB2678. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully  
Candace Nakamoto



DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI  
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM  
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND  
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE**  
P.O. BOX 150  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE  
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND  
MANAGEMENT DIVISION  
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION  
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

**WRITTEN ONLY**  
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI  
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE  
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON HEALTH AND  
COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION  
ON  
SENATE BILL NO. 2678

**February 10, 2022**  
**9:30 a.m.**  
**Room 229 and Videoconference**

RELATING TO THE HAWAII STATE HEALTH INSURANCE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on Senate Bill (S.B.) No. 2678.

S.B. No. 2678 appropriates an unspecified amount in general funds in FY 23 to the Executive Office on Aging to expand the Hawai'i State Health Insurance Assistance Program by contracting with third-party service providers and staffing consultants and recruiting more volunteers.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriation in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and

- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



## CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TO: Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair      Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair  
Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair      Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair  
Committee on Health      Committee on Commerce & Consumer  
Protection

FROM: Rob Van Tassell, President and CEO

DATE: Thursday, February 10, 2022 (9:30 a.m., Conference Rm. 229)

RE: **IN SUPPORT OF SB 2678, Relating to the Hawaii State Health Insurance Assistance Program**

Catholic Charities Hawai'i (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been serving people in need in the State of Hawaii since 1947.

CCH supports SB 2678, which would provide State funding to ensure the stability and continuity of the SHIP program in Hawaii.

CCH provides services for over 4,000 older adults each year. Our Benefits Enrollment Center and Case Management Programs assist low-income older adult clients to access needed benefits they are eligible for, such as SNAP (i.e. food stamps), Medicaid, Medicare subsidies and other income-eligible resources. We are aware that many seniors, from all income categories, are barraged with Medicare plan information particularly during Medicare Open Enrollment. We have seen what happens when a senior is enticed to enroll in a Medicare plan that does not meet the specific needs of that individual senior. This sometimes means seniors can no longer receive services from specific health care professionals (who may not accept their Medicare plan) or that seniors end up paying more for medications because they changed their Medicare plan and the plan no longer covers some of their required medications.

SHIP is an unbiased resource that we refer seniors to when they have questions about Medicare options or other questions about Medicare. We can trust that SHIP will have the most up-to-date Medicare information and that they are not influenced by any ties to specific Medicare plans.

SHIP has also been a training resource for CCH – providing essential Medicare training for our staff so that we can better assist our senior clients.

SHIP provides an essential service for Medicare recipients statewide. Catholic Charities Hawai'i asks for your support of SB 2678. For more information or questions, please feel free to email Diane Terada, Division Administrator, at [diane.terada@catholiccharitieshawaii.org](mailto:diane.terada@catholiccharitieshawaii.org) or call her via phone at 527-4702.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.



**SB-2678**

Submitted on: 2/8/2022 12:32:55 PM

Testimony for HTH on 2/10/2022 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Roberta Wong Murray	Testifying for Policy Advisory Board on Elder Affairs (PABEA)	Support	No

Comments:

On behalf of the Policy Advisory Board on Elder Affairs (PABEA), which advises the Executive Office on Aging, I am writing to express strong support for SB2678 relative to funding the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP).

Workers facing retirement may be unfamiliar with what Medicare - a federal health insurance program - will provide them and what additional coverage they might need to cover their medical status. SHIP's staff of two conduct and manage a volunteer-driven program which helps those who will soon become eligible for Medicare understand the ABCs of Medicare benefits, as well as the options for supplemental insurance and Medi-gap policies to absorb individual out-of-pocket costs not covered by Medicare.

SHIP volunteers provide confidential, one-one assistance to those seeking such information. This process enables future retirees to make an informed decision about their health care as a Medicare recipient.

Passage of this bill provides funding which will allow SHIP to hire more staff, engage in third party partnership contracts and recruit more volunteers to expand public outreach within the rural underserved communities of greater Oahu as well as throughout the neighbor islands.

**SB-2678**

Submitted on: 2/4/2022 3:34:50 PM

Testimony for HTH on 2/10/2022 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
joanne itano	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair & Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair ,

Senate Committee on Health

Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair and Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Commerce

Joanne Itano

Volunteer with Hawaii State Health Insurance Assistance Program

390 Wailupe Circle, Honolulu, HI 96821

Feb. 4, 2022

Support for SB2678, Relating to the State Health Insurance Assistance Program

Hawaii State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) is a federally funded, volunteer-based program that is administered by the Hawaii State Department of Health, Executive Office on Aging. Hawaii SHIP helps Medicare-eligible individuals, their families and caregivers, and soon-to-be 65 year olds make informed, cost-effective decisions about Medicare and related health insurance. This is accomplished through one-on-one counseling sessions, answering questions, and distributing informative brochures at health fairs, and providing Medicare-related presentations. These services are free to the public who contact Hawaii SHIP through the Help Line and website. Volunteers, who provide these important services, are recruited and trained throughout the year to keep up with the changes or updates to Medicare.

As a volunteer, I believe SHIP provides a valuable service to Medicare beneficiaries. Medicare is complex and is often confusing. For example, every year I get a call or two from EUTF retirees who ask if they should change their insurance because of the many TV ads or mailings they receive during open enrollment. Or we help beneficiaries sort through the many drug insurance coverages to provide the most cost effective plan. Our tag line is “free, unbiased, local” information about Medicare.

Hence, I strongly support SB2678, relating to the State Health Insurance Assistance Program, which would provide Hawaii SHIP with much-needed funding to expand access to important Medicare-related services to Hawaii residents statewide by contracting with third party service providers and staffing consultants.

There are 278,077 Medicare beneficiaries statewide as of 2021. Hawaii SHIP’s goal is to assist as many beneficiaries in Hawaii as possible. In 2021, SHIP assisted 2,930 with Medicare counseling and reached 7,701 beneficiaries through outreach presentations and fairs/exhibits. By 2025, SHIP will need to reach 10,000 Medicare beneficiaries which is a drastic increase from SHIP’s current capacity.

With more partnerships and volunteers, Hawaii SHIP could provide more outreach and education to Hawaii’s residents. SB2678. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

**SB-2678**

Submitted on: 2/5/2022 11:32:19 AM

Testimony for HTH on 2/10/2022 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Lillian Uedoi	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I fully support this bill as a kupuna and urge the committee to pass it. I sure will need their help!

**SB-2678**

Submitted on: 2/5/2022 2:07:12 PM

Testimony for HTH on 2/10/2022 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Cynthia Ching	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

SHIP is a wonderful and helpful service and I; therefore, support the continuation of Federal funding for this service.

Mahalo!



**SB-2678**

Submitted on: 2/5/2022 5:02:05 PM

Testimony for HTH on 2/10/2022 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Leila Kuehner	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

We need more Ship / Medicare volunteers as they help us greatly.

**SB-2678**

Submitted on: 2/5/2022 6:03:01 PM

Testimony for HTH on 2/10/2022 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Deanne Oi	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support this bill

Bill: SB2678

Date: February 5, 2022

Position: SUPPORT

I am writing in my individual capacity and not representing the University of Hawaii.

As an associate professor of health policy at UH Manoa, I have witnessed firsthand of the important work that the Hawaii State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) as a SHIP volunteer as well as the instructor of the Introduction to Medicare course taught at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Medicare is the flagship federal entitlement program under the Social Security Act. But its complexity makes it confusing for anyone to navigate, even health policy or health insurance experts. The SHIP program helps Hawaii's people to navigate the ocean of Medicare and make informed and cost-effective decisions for health insurance and health care.

Health care costs are enormous in the United States. It is estimated that 1 in 10 Americans forego health care due to the cost of health care. Without effectively navigating Medicare, seniors can face prohibitive health care bills and challenges in health care access. Further, access to health care is increasingly important as one gets older. Americans who are 65 years and older – all of whom are eligible for Medicare – have a 1 in 5 risk of being hospitalized at least once each year.

The Hawaii SHIP program is leveraged by only two full-time staff to train a cadre of 80 dedicated volunteers, contributing more than 7000 hours of highly specialized technical assistance to the public for free. The benefits to Hawaii's consumers have been enormous, supporting more than 20,000 people, though representing fewer than 10% of all Medicare beneficiaries. Research on SHIP or SHIP-like programs in Alabama and California have found that Medicare counseling can help seniors to save between a hundred to a thousand dollars each year. Future research will be done to estimate the return on investment of the Hawaii SHIP program.

Moreover, its volunteers undergo rigorous counselor training and certification using a national federally developed online curriculum. All volunteers are required to be free of any financial conflict of interest. Unlike insurance brokers or financial advisors, SHIP volunteers provide unbiased advice and have no financial stake in a client's insurance decision. General funds to support this federally leveraged project will enable the program to reach more Medicare beneficiaries and ensure program stability given uncertain discretionary federal funding.

It is important that third party service providers meet conflict of interest requirements that ensures that the provider (including all members of the governing board) is independent and free from all conflicts of interest. The provider should not be controlled or influenced by, and does not have any corporate relation to, any individual or entity that may make or receive payments for health care services that would financially benefit or profit from advice given to seniors seeking Medicare advice. The provider should provide unbiased advice in the best interest of the individual seeking assistance, and not serve as an insurance broker in any way.

**Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair**  
**Senator, Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair**  
**Committee on Health (HTH)**

**Senator, Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair**  
**Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair**  
**Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection (CPN)**

*Mae Fujii*, Volunteer, Hawaii State Health Insurance Assistance Program

### **SUPPORT for SB2678 for the State Health Insurance Assistance Program**

During my five years as a volunteer, I have witnessed SHIP undergoing phenomenal transformation and growth in membership from about ten to more than forty *core* or actively involved volunteers. After a much-needed face lift with innovative improvements in procedures & technology, SHIP has expanded services to a larger and wider population to assist all beneficiaries to choose the best Medicare insurance plans for their health care through outreach, media, exhibits, counseling, and presentations. Our dedicated volunteers receive in-service training through monthly meetings, participate in annual recertification, and view webinars for updates on changes from Medicare & their partners.

As an actively involved SHIPmate, I have gained invaluable experiences in educating, empowering, & assisting our beneficiaries to navigate through the maze of Medicare & health insurance options to make the best informed decisions for themselves.

*Let me share two unforgettable incidents that reflect how well our counseling & other services are appreciated by those we serve. In conducting a reference check interview, the respondent surprised me when he asked, "Why are you working on a holiday?" to which I replied, "We SHIPmates enjoy working all-year round to serve our community." While assisting an unhappy beneficiary with a complex issue, I felt great joy when his mood did a complete turn-around during our phone session when he ended with this declaration, "I'm calling the President to ask that you volunteers get paid for all that you do!"*

I expect no material gain for volunteering, but welcome these lighter moments of humor along with gratitude, appreciation, & friendly hugs during normal times, which have given me positive purpose in retirement & heartfelt rewards blessed by friendships shared with my exemplary SHIPmates. Finally, our outstanding staff at the helm, that I figuratively refer to as ***The Wind Beneath Our Sails,*** deserve recognition, appreciation, and support during this opportunity to submit testimony.

**I humbly ask the distinguished members of the Health & Commerce and Consumer Protection Committees for their favorable consideration & support of SB2678 for funding to expand this much-needed on-going journey to provide assistance to our silver haired "tsunami" kupuna and all residents, who deserve only smooth sailing to enjoy good health and the best quality of life.**

Respectfully submitted and mahalo nui loa,

***Mae Fujii***

808-395-1460

February, 2022



Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair  
Senator, Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair  
Committee on Health (HTH)

Senator, Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair  
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair  
Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection (CPN)

Support for SB2678, Relating to the State Health Insurance Assistance Program

Dear Chairs Keohokalole & Baker, Vice Chairs Baker & Chang, and committee members:

My name is Wanda Anae-Onishi; I am a resident of Oahu. I am testifying in support of SB2678, Relating to the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP).

Medicare is extremely confusing with its Parts A thru D that provide different types of health insurance coverage, various eligibility requirements and enrollment periods, and late enrollment penalties. Fortunately, Hawaii SHIP is here to assist and educate the citizens of Hawaii with and about this complex federal health insurance. This program, under the Hawaii State Department of Health, Executive Office on Aging, provides free, unbiased, and confidential information and counseling assistance through its dedicated volunteers who help Medicare beneficiaries, their caregivers, and soon-to-be retirees make informed, cost-effective decisions based on the health concerns of the individual.

The Baby Boomer generation continues to age into Medicare with over 10,000 beneficiaries added annually nationwide. Hawaii SHIP must be prepared to assist the future beneficiaries in our state. The funding provided will allow the program to recruit more volunteers statewide and hire third-party contractors to meet the needs of this growing population and expand access to the free services.

I urge you to support SB2678, relating to the State Health Insurance Assistance Program. Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,  
Wanda Anae-Onishi

The Honorable Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair  
The Honorable Rosalyn H. Baker, Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee on Health

The Honorable Rosalyn Baker, Chair  
The Honorable Stanley Chang, Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

February 8, 2022

Support for SB2678, Relating to the State Health Insurance Assistance Program

Aloha,

My name is Ethan Miyamoto and I am a student at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, and a volunteer with the Hawai'i State Health Insurance Program (SHIP).

There are 278,077 Medicare beneficiaries statewide as of 2021. Hawai'i SHIP's goal is to assist as many beneficiaries in Hawai'i as possible. In 2021, SHIP assisted 2,930 with Medicare counseling and reached 7,701 beneficiaries through outreach presentations and fairs/exhibits. By 2025, SHIP will need to reach 10,000 Medicare beneficiaries which is a drastic increase from SHIP's current capacity.

As a volunteer, one of the things that I have done is counsel beneficiaries on their Medicare questions and concerns. I have counseled clients on almost every island. One of the more memorable areas that someone has called from is Moloka'i. SHIP is able to provide assistance to our residents who live in the most rural areas of our state. Another thing that I have done as a volunteer was provide education to high school students on the basics of Medicare. Not only do we assist those who are older adults, but we also have helped to educate younger people on Medicare topics. Lastly, as a volunteer I have presented many presentations to organizations that work with older adults. By passing on knowledge about Medicare to these organizations and entities, they are better able to assist the older adults that they work with on a daily basis.

There are many different roles for volunteers at SHIP. There are counselors, presenters, plan comparison specialists, and many more. I believe that by expanding the number of volunteers, our program would be better able to assist beneficiaries. Also, having much-needed funding would expand access to important Medicare-related services to Hawai'i residents statewide.

I urge the committee to pass SB2678. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair  
Senator Rosalyn Baker, Vice Chair  
Committee on Health



Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair  
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice-Chair  
Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health

Support for SB2678 (companion HB1825) during hearing of the Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health relating to the State Health Insurance Assistance Program

Dear Senators Keohokalole, Baker, and Chang:

I am a volunteer Medicare counselor with the State Health Insurance Assistance Program and am also a retired physician who saw patients in the Hilo area and was also the East Hawaii Medical Director for the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation from 2010 until 2017. In both my clinical practice and as a hospital medical director, I saw or heard of many patients who did not get the medications, lab tests, x-rays, or follow-up care because they were concerned about the cost. For example, it is estimated that 30% to 50% of patients either never pick up their prescriptions or take them incorrectly, partially due to financial concerns. Their financial concern is often because they made a poor choice of insurance or were not aware of the many programs for low income Hawaii and U.S. residents. I believe that I and the many SHIP volunteers are helping our fellow residents obtain better coverage that will allow them to make medical decisions with less concern about cost. Better ability to pay and health for our residents will also ultimately result in lower costs to our health care system, which is significantly subsidized by the state and the U.S. government. SHIP's use of volunteers along with a very small staff is a cost effective way to help Hawaii residents obtain cost effective high quality health care.

An example is a resident that I counseled recently who is 68 years old and whose's only medical insurance is the free Medicare Part A which only partially covers hospital costs. She has no insurance at all for outpatient care. She had a major injury to her leg, did not seek care until she get much worse because of cost concerns, and now has a much worse situation with thousands of dollars in doctor bills and who may end up with additional thousands of hospital bills if she needs in-patient care. It is very likely that she will not be able to pay for her care. If she had approached a SHIP counselor before this accident, it is very likely that we would have been able to help her obtain cost effective insurance or a subsidy program and would have been able to prevent the worsening of her health and financial situation. Cases like this is the reason why I and other counselors have volunteered. In addition, if she and others like her cannot afford to pay their bills, the State of Hawaii sometimes directly or indirectly end up subsidizing the public hospitals and their clinics for un-reimbursed care.

In my previous role as Medical Director for three hospitals on the Big Island, I have dealt with many staff members and executives of Hawaii State Government. I have found the very small number of staff working at the SHIP program to be among the very best state employees that I have encountered, due to their very hard work ethic despite understaffing, their prompt and helpful responses to my and other volunteers' many questions and suggestions, and their dedication to serving the needs of the SHIP clients. It is clear to me that they need additional resources, and that this assistance will give them a much better chance of reaching the increased number of clients needed to continue the federal funding for SHIP.



Therefore, I encourage you to pass SB2678 because of its benefits to the citizens of Hawaii, its low cost relative to its benefits, its impact to the State of Hawaii budget by lowering the number of uninsured, and through continued federal funding.

Thank you for reviewing my testimony

Edward Peskin, MD

Volunteer Counselor, Hawaii SHIP

Home address: 18 Makakai Place, Hilo, HI 96720

#### Background Information about SHIP

Hawaii State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) is a federally funded, volunteer-based program that is administered by the Hawaii State Department of Health, Executive Office on Aging. Hawaii SHIP helps Medicare-eligible individuals, their families and caregivers, and soon-to-be retirees make informed, cost-effective healthcare decisions. This is accomplished through one-on-one counseling sessions, answering questions and distributing informative brochures at health fairs, and providing Medicare-related presentations. These services are free to the public who contact Hawaii SHIP through the Help Line and website. Volunteers, who provide these important services, are recruited and trained throughout the year to keep up with the changes or updates to Medicare.

There are 278,077 Medicare beneficiaries statewide as of 2021. Hawaii SHIP's goal is to assist as many beneficiaries in Hawaii as possible. In 2021, SHIP assisted 2,930 with Medicare counseling and reached 7,701 beneficiaries through outreach presentations and fairs/exhibits. By 2025, SHIP will need to reach 10,000 Medicare beneficiaries which is a drastic increase from SHIP's current capacity.