



**Connecticut
Public Health
Association**

Promoting Public Health in Connecticut Since 1916

Jonathan Noel
President

Morgan Spencer
President Elect

Elizabeth Schwartz
Treasurer

Heather Clinton
Secretary

Brittany Allen
Past President

Board of Directors

Joan Ascheim
Kevin Borrup
Courtney Butler
Angela Carrano
Riddhi Doshi
William Faraclas
Steve Huleatt
Laura King
Jenna Lupi
Linda Mako
Rasy Mar
Bidisha Nath
Colleen O'Connor
Mike Pascucilla
Millie Sequinot
Jeff Shaw
Cyndi Stern
Kathi Traugh
Carolyn Wysocki

*CPHA is an affiliate of
the American Public
Health Association.*

TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
REGARDING S.B. 126
*AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY HEALTH
WORKERS*
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH
FEBRUARY 10, 2017

Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Steinberg, and members of the Public Health Committee. I am pleased to submit this testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Public Health Association where I serve as Co-Chair of the Advocacy Committee. The Connecticut Public Health Association (CPHA) is pleased to endorse Senate Bill 126 which would define the roles and responsibilities of Community Health Workers. CPHA's mission is to promote the exchange of knowledge to improve the practice of Connecticut's public health professionals and the health and well-being of the people of Connecticut.

Following in the footsteps of our parent organization, the American Public Health Association, CPHA has long supported Community Health Workers (CHWs) as integral to addressing social determinants of health and bridging health equity gaps. A large body of evidence shows that CHWs improve the health of their communities through health education, chronic disease management support, health screenings, advocacy, and navigation services. As members of the communities they serve, CHWs are uniquely positioned to understand and respond to individual and group needs in ways that are responsive to the community culture. With the addition of CHWs to the workforce, CT's healthcare system will have the capacity to meaningfully address the socio-economic needs of the population, which are the underlying causes of the most widespread and costly chronic conditions plaguing us today including diabetes, asthma, and hypertension.

Most healthcare professions are recognized by a statute that defines their role and scope of practice as well as a certification process by which an individual can become recognized as competent to perform in their field. This process supports the ongoing development of the profession over time in response to changing health system needs and advancements in knowledge and also protects the public by assuring that individuals have met necessary standards necessary to effectively serve in that role.

In Connecticut, CHWs lack a clearly defined professional role, scope, or certification process. Unlike other health professions, the role and core training of CHWs is unregulated and largely left to employers to provide. Nationally, however, there have been efforts to establish these processes. Massachusetts passed legislation to establish a State-led CHW certification program; Rhode Island is in the process of implementing a voluntary CHW certification program; Maine has passed legislation to establish a voluntary CHW registry program; Minnesota developed a reimbursement mechanism for CHWs through Medicaid, and Oregon developed a State-led certification and registry for CHWs. In addition, the Community Health Worker Core Consensus (C3) Project, a national effort to define the roles, skills, and qualities of CHWs, was released in 2016 in an effort to align states implementing CHW legislation.

The goal behind most national efforts to define the CHW scope is to establish both a professional identity for CHWs and enable a sustainable funding mechanism for their services. The greatest challenge currently facing CHW workforce development is a lack of sustainable funding, with most CHWs in Connecticut being paid through time-limited grant funding. Studies have demonstrated the significant return on investment (ROI) of utilizing CHWs in healthcare teams, yet payers have been largely unwilling to reimburse for their services given the lack professional regulation. CPHA supports defining the roles and responsibilities of CHWs in Connecticut and considering an option for voluntary certification as a crucial next step toward fully recognizing CHWs as healthcare professionals and enabling sustainable funding for their services.

CPHA urges the Public Health Committee to support SB 126 to define the roles and responsibilities of Community Health Workers in Connecticut. Further, CPHA would like to urge the Committee to specifically consider the recommendations of the CHW Association of Connecticut, Southwestern Area Health Education Center, and the CT State Innovation Model CHW Advisory Committee in developing a full draft of this bill.

For additional information on CPHA's position on SB 126 or other issues related to health equity, public health infrastructure, environmental health, or prevention, please contact Jenna Lupi, jenna.lupi@gmail.com or 203-804-3562.