



**Testimony in Support of  
Proposed Bill No. 126  
An Act Concerning Community Health Workers**

Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Steinberg and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Veronica Mansfield. I am a pediatric nurse practitioner and asthma educator working at Middlesex Hospital's Center for Chronic Care Management (CCCM). In 2012, our CCCM was one of two sites in CT awarded a CMS Innovation Grant as part of the New England Asthma Innovative Collaborative (NEAIC). This grant provided home visits which included: asthma education, environmental assessments and integrated pest management for high risk pediatric asthma patients. The model in CT included Asthma Educators (nurses) and Community Health Workers (CHWs) providing the direct patient care.

**We support and thank you for proposing this bill (126: AAC Community Health Workers), as it encourages provider and community input on the roles and responsibilities of CHWs.**

When Middlesex CCCM was awarded the grant, we immediately collaborated with our licensed home health care department (Middlesex Hospital Homecare) identifying pediatric nurses and home health aides (HHAs) that would provide the asthma care. The HHAs were a natural fit to expand their skills to the newly developed CHW roles as their knowledge and experience of providing care in the home serves as a strong foundation.

HHAs participated in comprehensive trainings over a four week period of time. The initial training was on the role of the CHW followed then by asthma specific training which included (asthma management, environmental assessment and integrated pest management).

In fact, when the HHAs had ongoing training for the CHW roles, they were able to give input in necessary training topics such as in-home safety and infection control practices. These essentials were not on the minds of the CHW trainers or the grant organizers.

When patients were enrolled in the program, the nurse/asthma educator accompanied the CHW on the initial home visit and completed the comprehensive asthma assessment. The CHWs completed subsequent visits independently with the ability to contact the asthma educator for identified concerns or questions.

The HHA background was a huge asset the CHW role. As I think back to the almost 80 patients seen during that time, I think of the homecare skills used and the times that I was called with "can you call the mother, her child doesn't look right." Or can "the nurse make an extra visit as the child went to the emergency room and wants nurse to go over the sick plan with the parent again". Those were just two examples of many.

Though our grant ended in 2015, our recent outcomes showed statistically significant reduction in missed school days and improvement in asthma control as well as decrease in ED utilization and hospitalizations among participants enrolled.

The role of the CHW in effectively managing such chronic illnesses in the community is a fairly new concept, but one that has met with some good successes. Our grant initiative supports the CHW but also recognizes the value of the HHA experience and knowledge in helping build a stronger CHW for long term chronic community management.

Below are some of the roles and responsibilities that we feel are important for the Community Health Worker's success:

### **Community Health Worker Roles & Responsibilities**

1. Provide home-based services to high-risk patients and their families. Provide education regarding a specific chronic disease (asthma, diabetes etc.).
2. Assess patient/family needs and develop intervention plans in conjunction with family and other involved persons/providers.
3. Provide case management and advocacy services for families requiring extensive knowledge of community resources including: health and social services; housing resources, including shelters for homeless and/or victims of domestic violence; day care resources; and the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Social Services.
4. Possess ability to access services for clients.
5. Accompany patients/families to appointments as necessary.
6. Work as a member of a multidisciplinary team of nurses, primary care providers, specialists and community groups; and effectively collaborate with other health and social service agencies.
7. Attend and participate in staff meetings, multidisciplinary case conferences.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our input on the Community Health Worker, a newly evolving important role in the community. Given our experiences to date with this role and the value of it within the community setting for managing chronic asthma, I'm happy to answer any questions to help further define the role and responsibilities.

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