



# Community Health Center Association of Connecticut

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Testimony of

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In Support of

*Senate Bill 126: An Act Concerning Community Health Workers*

Public Health Committee

February 10, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 126, *An Act Concerning Community Health Workers*. On behalf of sixteen of Connecticut's federally-qualified health centers (FQHCs), which serve over 350,000 patients each year, I thank the Committee for raising this bill and offer support.

Community health workers (CHWs) are used in a variety of settings and roles to enhance patient understanding, engagement and adherence. They help improve access to care, by arranging specialist appointments, transportation and translation services; by listening to people to determine and remove barriers to good health; and by explaining, with cultural sensitivity, medical advice/directives to patients, to advance good health. FQHCs find the use of CHWs helpful in a variety of ways – enrollment in insurance and SNAP; coordination of care for patients with chronic diseases; and health coaching and disease management. In short, CHWs are an essential component of “person-centered” care. They are truly front-line public health workers.

National research demonstrates the value of CHWs. However, to date, CHWs generally have been supported by time-limited grants. When the grants end, the services provided by CHWs do, as well.

As this Committee knows well, Connecticut has been moving towards consistent training, certification and recognition of CHWs, through the work of a variety of organizations and task forces, such as the State Innovation Model CHW Advisory Group, Southwestern AHEC and others. Connecticut is already on this path.

CHCACT encourages the Committee to continue to develop this proposal, with the input of appropriate health professionals, policy experts and payers, towards a sustainable model of CHWs in health and community settings.

Thank you for your consideration and your hard work on behalf of our great state.