



A Section of the Connecticut Public Health Association

TESTIMONY OF COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS ASSOCIATION OF CT 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 Community Health Workers Association of Connecticut (CHWACT), where I serve as President of the Association.

CHWACT is a Section of the Connecticut Public Health Association. CHWACT's mission is to advance the CHW workforce through policy, education, research and leadership. CHWACT is pleased to endorse Senate Bill 126, which would define the roles and responsibilities of Community Health Workers (CHW).

CHWACT defines a CHW as follows: "A Community Health Worker (CHW) is a front line public health worker who is a trusted member of, and/or has a unique understanding of the experience, language, culture, and socioeconomic needs of the community served. A CHW serves as a liaison/intermediary between individuals, communities and health and social services to facilitate access to care, improve the quality and cultural responsiveness of service delivery, and address social determinants of health. CHWs build individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of culturally appropriate services such as: outreach and engagement; education, coaching, and informal counseling; social

"To advance the CHW workforce through policy, education, research and leadership"

support; advocacy; care coordination; basic screenings and assessments; and research and evaluation.” (Approved in 2016 by the Board of Directors of the CHWACT)

As you see in this definition, CHWs are the answer to help eliminate health disparities in Connecticut. Having CHWs as a part of the medical team will give the community the opportunity to better access services, follow up with appointments, make sure that they have someone to advocate for them, better understand instructions related on how to take medications, make sure that providers are aware of what the patient is taking in case the individual suffers from different chronic diseases like diabetes, asthma, and hypertension. The CHW is simply the bridge that is missing at this moment in our community. The CHW will help individuals in need better manage their health issues and at the same time will be looking at a person as a whole. The CHW workforce needs statutory recognition that defines our role and responsibilities as well as a certification process by which an individual can become recognized as competent to perform in their field. This process will help the development of the profession, facilitating the work of all the team players and protecting individual’s health.

CHWACT urges the Public Health Committee to support SB 126 to define the roles and responsibilities of CHWs in Connecticut. In addition, CHWACT would like to urge the Committee to specifically consider the recommendations of the Connecticut Public Health Association, 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 CHWACT’s position on SB 126 or other issues related to the Association, please contact Milagrosa “Millie” Seguinot, chwassociation@cpha.info or 203-685-6429.