



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

The definition of a Community Health Worker is 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 support; advocacy; care coordination; basic screenings and

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assessments; and research and evaluation.” This definition was approved in 2016 by the Board of Directors of the CHWACT.

As you see on this definition, Community Health Workers are the answer to help eliminate health disparities in CT. Including Community Health Workers as 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 to how to take medications, and 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 Community Health Worker is the bridge that is missing at this moment between our communities and our health system. CHWs help individuals in need better manage their health issues and, at the same time, looks at a person as a whole.

The CHW workforce needs to be recognized by a statute that defines our 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 will help to further develop the profession, facilitate the work of all members of the health care team, and protect the public’s health.

CHWACT urges the Public Health Committee to support SB 126 to define the roles and responsibilities of Community Health Workers in Connecticut. CHWACT also urges 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.

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