



# Community Health Center Association of Connecticut

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Testimony of

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Supporting

*SB 859: An Act Concerning Community Health Workers*

Public Health Committee

March 25, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to provide support for Senate Bill 859, An Act Concerning Community Health Workers.

On behalf of the Community Health Center Association of Connecticut (CHCACT), and its sixteen member federally-qualified health centers, I want to thank the Committee for raising this bill.

Community health workers (CHWs) are used in a variety of settings and roles to enhance patient understanding, engagement and adherence to treatment plans. Health centers have utilized CHWs for decades (though usually under other titles, such as “patient navigator,” “care coordinator,” or “access to care specialist”). CHWs are often from the same neighborhoods as patients, speak their language, and understand their culture. As such, they complement the clinical side of health care delivery in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to:

- arranging specialist appointments, transportation and translation services;
- listening to people to determine and reduce barriers to good health;
- explaining medical advice/directives to patients;
- coordinating care for patients with chronic diseases;
- coaching people on self-management of diseases; and
- enrolling people in HUSKY and insurance through Access Health CT.

In short, CHWs are an essential component of “person-centered” care. They are truly front-line public health workers. Over and over, national and local research demonstrates the value of CHWs, including with the PCMH+ program administered by the state Department of Social Services, as part of the State Innovation Model (SIM). However, CHWs generally have been

supported by time-limited grants. When the grants end, the services provided by CHWs often do, as well.

It is time for a sustainable model of funding for CHWs. 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. This bill is the next step forward – once CHWs are certified, HUSKY and other insurers should pay for their services.

Thank you for your consideration and your hard work on behalf of Connecticut residents. Please feel free to reach out with any questions: [dpolun@chcact.org](mailto:dpolun@chcact.org) or 860.667.7820.