Testimony in Support of S.B. 991, An Act Concerning Medicaid Reimbursement for Community Health Workers

Human Services Committee
Tawana M. Hart
February 21, 2023

Dear Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, and esteemed members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Mrs. Tawana Hart (formally Tawana Guadarrama), and I live in New Britain, Connecticut. I stand in support of S.B. 991, An Act Concerning Medicaid Reimbursement for Community Health Workers.

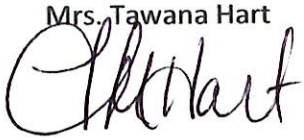
Currently, Connecticut's Medicaid program does not reimburse Community Health Worker (CHW) services or incentivize health care providers to work with CHWs. Community health workers are an effective way to address inequities and promote health, particularly for low-income households served by Medicaid.

CHWs are public health professionals and members of a clinical team. CHWs help members of the community have the quality of life that they deserve. They have been linking underserved communities and underrepresented communities with resources and services that are making the difference in the lives of these individuals. CHWs speak the language of our community, they are the voice of those that are not comfortable or have lack of knowledge of the system. They have been advocating for our communities for years to bring equity to the services that they need. They can work in different settings and represent different cultures. We are public health professionals that follow a code of ethics to help us serve the community at the level that they deserve. These are some of the reasons why we are requesting your support of S.B. 991.
I have a bachelor's degree in health administration management. I have been licensed with the CT Department of Health as a Community Health Worker since 2020. I have been working with my current, nonprofit organization (Latino Community Services) for approximately 9 years. I have been serving my community, walking the streets, and engaging community members in the importance of substance use safety practices, safe sex practices, and the importance of being testing regularly for infectious diseases. As a Community Health Worker, I have had the honor of helping the homeless secure housing, obtain food and clothing for individuals and families. Having lived experiences allows the community members to trust me and allow me to lead them safely and confidentially to a path of success.

Medicaid reimbursement for community health workers should:

- Center community and CHW voices in all stages of design and implementation
- Reimburse at rates high enough to employ CHWs at a livable wage and cover the costs of supervision, billing, and routine training
- Cover a comprehensive list of CHW services

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 991, An Act Concerning Medicaid Reimbursement for Community Health Workers.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Tawana Hart