

September 8, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The 93 undersigned national, state, and local organizations write in support of H.R. 8151 and S. 3479, the *Building a Sustainable Workforce for Healthy Communities Act*. This bipartisan legislation strengthens federal support for community health workers to improve health outcomes in medically underserved communities. **We urge members of Congress to co-sponsor these bills, and ask Congressional leaders to ensure their passage this year.**

Community health workers (CHWs) are an essential workforce to help provide coordinated, high-quality health care and social services to communities that need them most. They support a range of duties, such as working directly with hospitals, clinics, health care systems, health departments, family caregivers, and community-based organizations to be a trusted voice and bridge to those services. CHWs help people navigate social supports, such as access to food, clean water, jobs, education, safe housing, and other needs that affect health, but are outside of traditional health care institutions. They work hand in hand with social workers, clinical staff, and patient navigators to connect to communities who may not yet have broadband, may face language barriers, or may not trust a traditional medical system. Research has shown that CHWs can reduce hospitalizations, increase patient satisfaction,¹ and improve health while saving money for taxpayers.²

¹ Kangovi S, Mitra N, Norton L, Harte R, Zhao X, Carter T, Grande D, Long JA. Effect of Community Health Worker Support on Clinical Outcomes of Low-Income Patients Across Primary Care Facilities: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *JAMA Intern Med*. 2018 Dec 1;178(12):1635-1643. doi: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2018.4630. PMID: 30422224; PMCID: PMC6469661.

² Kangovi S, Mitra N, Grande D, Long JA, Asch DA. Evidence-Based Community Health Worker Program Addresses Unmet Social Needs And Generates Positive Return On Investment. *Health Affairs* 2020 39:2, 207-213. www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2019.00981

CHWs have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, and continue to play a critical role in the response to the pandemic, as well as other threats to health and wellbeing. In rural communities and areas impacted by health workforce shortages, CHWs fill gaps and connect people to care. CHWs also play an important role in breaking down barriers and delays in care for the millions of people in the U.S. experiencing new health issues from Long COVID and its associated conditions. Federal investments in the workforce through the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act* of 2020 and the *American Rescue Plan Act* of 2021 have enabled state and local governments to hire and support CHWs – but the funding is time-limited. In order for the U.S. to build on lessons learned from the pandemic response and grow this essential workforce with invaluable skills, talents, resourcefulness, and expertise, Congress must ensure funding for CHWs is full and sustainable. Without sufficient and sustained investments in these roles, CHWs are unable to address the significant challenges their communities face.

The *Building a Sustainable Workforce for Healthy Communities Act* is a strong first step toward significant and sustained funding. It would reauthorize and strengthen a CDC program that funds the recruitment, training, and mobilization of CHWs across the country. The bill would improve the program’s focus on serving areas with a high burden of disease, low socio-economic status, or shortages of health professionals. The bill would also facilitate the sharing of best practices and technical assistance in the U.S. to help grantees augment the services they provide to communities. These improvements will help address the long-standing health inequities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and strengthen a workforce that has been essential to health equity and the pandemic response in communities across the U.S.

H.R. 8151 and S. 3479 are a positive step forward to better support the CHW workforce and their work to promote community health. In future legislation, we also encourage Congress to provide robust and sustainable funding for CHW programs, and to support strong labor standards and pay for the community health workforce. Thank you to Senators Casey, Tillis, Smith, Murkowski, and Rosen and Representatives Ruiz and Kuster for their bipartisan support and leadership on this important issue.

We urge members of Congress to co-sponsor H.R. 8151 and S. 3479 and to advance this critical legislation without delay.

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

ACA Consumer Advocacy
Aligning for Health
Allergy & Asthma Network
American Humanist Association
American Muslim Health Professionals
Asian Health Coalition
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)
Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation
Caring Communities
Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research (CLEAR)
Civil Rights Corps
Coalition on Human Needs
Common Threads
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)
COVID Survivors for Change
COVID-19 Longhailer Advocacy Project
Elation Health
Families USA
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ+ Equality
HealthBegins
Hispanic Federation
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Long COVID Justice / Strategies for High Impact
Main Street Alliance
Marked By COVID
MomsRising
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of State Long Term Care Ombudsman Programs (NASOP)
National Birth Equity Collaborative
National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH)
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence- Maryland Chapter
National Employment Law Project

National Immigration Law Center
National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC)
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
National Urban League
Partners In Health
Pathways Community HUB Institute
Patient-Led Research Collaborative
Penn Center for Community Health Workers
Primary Care Collaborative
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Public Citizen
Right to Health Action
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Solve M.E.
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
The Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
Treatment Action Group
Triage Cancer
United Church of Christ Justice and Local Church Ministries
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Yale Global Health Justice Partnership

State and Local Organizations:

A Better Chance A Better Community (ABC2)
Asheville Buncombe Institute for Parity Achievement (ABIPA)
Addiction Connections Resource (Maryland)
AIDS Foundation Chicago
CityGate Dream Center
Community Health Council of Wyandotte County
Daniel Carl Torsch Foundation Inc
El Centro Hispano, Inc.
El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center
First 1,000 Days Kansas
Florida Health Justice Project
Georgians for a Healthy Future

Hawai'i Island Community Health Center
Hawai'i Public Health Institute
Hawaii Family Caregiver Coalition
Health Forward Foundation
Healthcare Network
James' Place Inc.
K-State Research and Extension: Kansas State University
Kentucky Equal Justice Center
Kentucky Voices for Health
Lawrence Hall
Maine Primary Care Association
Michigan Primary Care Association
NC Area Health Education Center
NC FIELD, Inc.
North Carolina Community Health Worker Association
North Carolina Serious Illness Coalition
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center
Southeastern Healthcare of NC, Inc.
The Children's Partnership
UUFHCT
Voices of Hope, Inc.
Westchester Jewish Coalition for Immigration