



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

HB 871

DATE: March 25, 2025

SPONSOR: Delegates Bagnall, et al.

ASSIGNED TO: Finance

CONTACT PERSON: Leslie Frey

(leslie.frey@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: FAVORABLE (Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services)

Health Services Cost Review Commission - Community Benefits - Community Health Worker Workforce Program

House Bill 871 adds community health workers (CHW) workforce program between a nonprofit hospital and a community-based organization to the definition of community benefit. A "community benefit" is a planned, organized, and measured activity that is intended to meet identified community health needs within a service area. Under the bill, a CHW workforce program provides services to patients of a nonprofit hospital that are intended to improve health outcomes and address social determinants of health.

CHWs are frontline public health workers who are trusted members of their community with a deep understanding of the barriers to attaining good health that their community faces. They often share similar lived experiences with the communities they serve, creating a connection between healthcare providers and the community. In Maryland, nearly 2,500 CHWs are embedded in a variety of settings across the healthcare system such as substance use disorder and mental health clinics, hospitals, and maternal health providers. CHWs advance health equity in Maryland but rely heavily on short-term grant funds to support their vital work. While 24 states have expanded their Medicaid programs to reimburse CHW services, Maryland's Medicaid program does not yet cover their services. Thus, many CHW positions in Maryland are supported through short-term funding through state and federal grants and philanthropic organizations. Grants available to support CHWs often restrict them to working with patients with specific diseases or in a specific setting instead of engaging in the holistic, community-focused work that make CHWs an effective health intervention.

House Bill 871 is an important step to securing the workforce stability of CHWs in many of Maryland's hospitals. Critically, the bill offers health insurance coverage to a CHW if they are uninsured and participating in the workforce program. Because House Bill 871 would improve health outcomes for both participating CHWs and the community members they serve, the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 871.