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Health and Government Operations
Committee

Subcommittees

Health Occupations and Long-Term Care

Public Health and
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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HB568 - Community Health Worker Appreciation Day

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill 568.

Community health workers (CHWs) are a key part of Maryland's health care workforce, but their work often goes unrecognized, often due to a lack of awareness of their role from the public and even sometimes those immersed in the healthcare ecosystem. CHWs provide a variety of services in areas of critical need. Without their dedication to providing important care, including preventative screenings and patient education, on a person-to-person basis, the overall health of underserved communities would certainly be jeopardized. Raising awareness of the hard work of these professionals is not only about recognition - it is about building a policy framework that ensures access to quality care for those who would not otherwise have the means to access preventative or behavioral care on a personal level.

HB568 requires the Governor to annually proclaim May 8th Community Health Worker Appreciation Day in Maryland. The language of the proclamation is modeled after a similar version adopted in Ohio in 2022.¹ Several other states, including Indiana², Michigan³, and New Mexico⁴ have also adopted formal recognitions of the diligent and important work of CHWs, and the US Department of

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[https://healthcareaccessnow.org/chw-day-news/#:~:text=FOR%20IMMEDIATE%20RELEASE%20Governor%20Mike,\(CHW\)%20Day%20in%20Ohio](https://healthcareaccessnow.org/chw-day-news/#:~:text=FOR%20IMMEDIATE%20RELEASE%20Governor%20Mike,(CHW)%20Day%20in%20Ohio)

2 <https://www.inchwa.org/CHWAppreciationDay>

3

<https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/news/proclamations/2023/08/01/august-2023-community-health-worker-appreciation-month#:~:text=WHEREAS%2C%20during%20this%20month%2C%20we,Worker%20Appreciation%20Month%20in%20Michigan.>

4 <https://www.nmhealth.org/news/awareness/2022/10/?view=1900>

Health and Human Services declared the last week in August of 2023 National Community Health Worker Awareness week.⁵

We have the ability to add Maryland to this list of states and continue the conversation about how best to ensure the health needs of underserved Marylanders can be met. I respectfully ask for a favorable report on HB568.

⁵ <https://www.hhs.gov/blog/2023/08/28/celebrating-community-health-workers.html>