

HB 568_PJC_Favorable_EEE.pdf

Uploaded by: Ashley Woolard

Position: FAV



Ashley Woolard, Staff Attorney
Public Justice Center
201 North Charles Street, Suite 1200
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
410-625-9409, ext. 224
woolarda@publicjustice.org

HB 568
Community Health Worker Appreciation Day
Hearing of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 28, 2024
1:00 PM

FAVORABLE

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Health and Benefits Equity Project advocates to protect and expand access to healthcare and safety net services for Marylanders struggling to make ends meet. We support policies and practices that are designed to eliminate economic and racial inequities and enable every Marylander to attain their highest level of health. We **strongly support HB 568**, which would require the Governor to annually proclaim May 8th as Community Health Worker (CHW) Appreciation Day. It would also urge educational and cultural organizations to promote the work of CHWs with informative programs and activities.

CHWs are a vital building block in achieving true health equity across Maryland. With pride, Maryland has the 4th largest CHW workforce in the country while Baltimore City has the 5th largest CHW workforce among metropolitan areas in the country. Because CHWs often come from the communities that they serve and share common barriers to attaining good health with their community, they are in a unique position to build trust and provide a patient-centered approach to care. Through education, advocacy and social support, CHWs help eliminate racial and economic disparities in health outcomes. But we've fallen behind in recognizing the value and contributions of these incredible frontline public health workers to patient care and continuity in care. Despite evidence that CHWs help reduce health disparities and generate significant cost savings for our healthcare system, Maryland's Medicaid program still does not reimburse their services.

HB 568 is a meaningful step in publicly recognizing this unique workforce and their undoubtedly impactful contributions to improving the health of low-income patient communities. For these reasons, the Public Justice Center urges the committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report for **HB 568**. Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Ashley Woolard at 410-625-9409 x 224 or woolarda@publicjustice.org.

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wages – 21-1094 Community Health Workers (May 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes211094.htm>.

HB 568_CHW Coalition_Favorable_EEE.pdf

Uploaded by: David Reische

Position: FAV



<https://bit.ly/CHW-MD>
TELEPHONE: (410) 625-9409
FAX: (410) 625-9423

HB 568
Community Health Worker Appreciation Day
Hearing of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 28, 2024
1:00 PM

FAVORABLE

The **Community Health Workers Empowerment Coalition of Maryland (CHWEC-MD)** is a coalition of CHWs and those who train, educate, support, and employ them across the state of Maryland. Our collective goals are to 1) reduce disparities in healthcare access and outcomes for Marylanders by expanding access to CHWs, 2) ensure that the voices of Maryland's CHWs are represented in the creation of laws and policies that impact the profession, and 3) advocate with CHWs for solutions that address systemic inequities that they experience in the field, including a lack of reimbursement for their services. We stand in **strong support of HB 568**, which would require the Governor to proclaim May 8th as Community Health Worker Appreciation Day in Maryland. It would also urge educational and cultural organizations to promote the work of CHWs with informative programs and activities.

A CHW is a frontline public health worker that is a trusted member 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, which puts them in the position to be a connection between healthcare providers and the community. CHWs are part of a comprehensive approach to patient health. They not only provide education and information to patients on health, they also help address social determinants of health like access to food, transportation, and housing by helping patients navigate social services. CHWs in Maryland are embedded in a variety of settings across our healthcare system such as substance use disorder and mental health clinics, hospitals, and maternal health providers. In fact, Maryland is the proud home of the 4th largest CHW workforce in the country with nearly 2,500 employed CHWs.¹

CHWs advance health equity in Maryland, but lack recognition for their contributions to improving health outcomes. Though Maryland has a large CHW workforce, our CHWs face significant barriers to remaining in their field. Maryland's Medicaid program does not currently

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wages – 21-1094 Community Health Workers (May 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes211094.htm>.

reimburse CHW services. Many CHW positions are supported only by short term funding, which is a barrier to creating sustainable careers in the profession. 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 such an effective health intervention. Once the grant funding dries up, CHWs may have no choice but to leave the field to pursue other financially sustainable career paths.

If passed, HB568 would contribute to directly addressing these barriers by educating potential employers of CHWs on the value of their work and how to better integrate them into care teams. It would also help raise awareness among Marylanders of the importance of CHW's in advancing health equity. Finally, HB568 would help our state prioritize identifying financially sustainable pathways for supporting CHW services and keeping practicing CHW's in the field.

Thank you for your consideration, and we respectfully urge this Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report for **HB568**. Should you have any questions about this testimony, please contact David Reische at reisched@publicjustice.org, or call 410-625-9409 ext. 277.

HB568_FAV_Sponsor.pdf

Uploaded by: Heather Bagnall

Position: FAV

HEATHER BAGNALL
Legislative District 33C
Anne Arundel County

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Subcommittees

Health Occupations and Long-Term Care

Public Health and
Minority Health Disparities



Annapolis Office
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 160
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3406 · 301-858-3406
800-492-7122 Ext. 3406
Heather.Bagnall@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 14, 2024

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

1

[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>

HB 568 - EEE - MDH - LOS (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Meghan Lynch

Position: FAV



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

March 28, 2024

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 568 – Community Health Worker Appreciation Day– Letter of Support

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of support for House Bill 568 – Community Health Worker Appreciation Day – Letter of Support.

House Bill (HB) 568 requires the Governor to annually proclaim May 8th as Community Health Worker Appreciation Day, and urge educational and cultural organizations to observe community health workers with informative programs and activities.

On May 8, 2018, the Community Health Worker (CHW) Act was signed into law, which established the State CHW Advisory Committee, the Certification of CHWs, and the Accreditation of CHW Certification Training Programs within the Department. The proposed proclamation of a Community Health Worker Appreciation Day will provide an opportunity for the Department to formally recognize and show appreciation to the over 1000 CHWs certified by the Department. CHWs play a critical role in the state’s public health and health care workforce. They serve as a liaison between behavioral health, social services, and the community. They also improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.

If you have any further questions, please contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director, Office of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary

2024 MCHS HB 568 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



Maryland Community Health System

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Bill: House Bill 568 - Community Health Worker Appreciation Day

Hearing Date: March 28, 2024

Position: Support

Maryland Community Health System (MCHS) supports *House Bill 568 - Community Health Worker Appreciation Day*. This bill requires the Governor to proclaim May 8th as Community Health Worker Appreciation Day.

As a network of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), we work towards more equitable health care by providing somatic, behavioral, and oral health services to underserved communities. We have great respect for Community Health Workers (CHWs), who play a unique role in the pursuit of more equitable health care by serving as a bridge between communities and health care systems. As trusted members of their communities, they connect community members to health care services and other resources, disseminate culturally and linguistically appropriate public health information, and serve as advocates for community members.

Recognition of CHWs has increased in recent years, but more needs to be done to educate people about the potential of the CHW workforce in the lives of Marylanders. For example, the Community Preventive Services Task Force recommends engaging CHWs to increase cervical cancer screening, based on strong evidence that CHW delivered interventions increased screenings.¹ This kind of recommendation highlights just one of the many ways CHWs can improve lives in the communities they serve.

We urge a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

¹ Community Preventive Services Task Force, Cancer Screening: Interventions Engaging Community Health Workers – Cervical Cancer <https://www.thecommunityguide.org/media/pdf/Cervical-Cancer-Screening-CHW-508.pdf>

2024 MNA HB 568 House Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



Committee: Health and Government Operations Committee

Bill: House Bill 568 - Community Health Worker Appreciation Day

Hearing Date: March 14, 2024

Position: Support

The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) supports *House Bill 568 - Community Health Worker Appreciation Day*. This bill requires the Governor to proclaim May 8th as Community Health Worker Appreciation Day.

Nurses regularly work with community health workers (CHWs), who connect community members to health care services, advocate for their community, and generally serve as a bridge between communities and the health care system. These efforts yield positive results, since studies have shown that CHWs can improve chronic disease management, increase access to preventive care, and reduce health care costs¹. Increasing the visibility of CHWs in this way would help to pursue the goal of increasing health equity in the state.

We urge a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

¹ Community Health Worker Integration with and Effectiveness in Health Care and Public Health in the United States, Annual Review of Public Health, Vol. 44:363-381, <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-071521-031648>

2024 MNA HB 568 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

Position: FAV



Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Bill: House Bill 568 - Community Health Worker Appreciation Day

Hearing Date: March 28, 2024

Position: Support

The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) supports *House Bill 568 - Community Health Worker Appreciation Day*. This bill requires the Governor to proclaim May 8th as Community Health Worker Appreciation Day.

Nurses regularly work with community health workers (CHWs), who connect community members to health care services, advocate for their community, and generally serve as a bridge between communities and the health care system. These efforts yield positive results, since studies have shown that CHWs can improve chronic disease management, increase access to preventive care, and reduce health care costs¹. Increasing the visibility of CHWs in this way would help to pursue the goal of increasing health equity in the state.

We urge a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

¹ Community Health Worker Integration with and Effectiveness in Health Care and Public Health in the United States, Annual Review of Public Health, Vol. 44:363-381, <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-071521-031648>

Health Care for the Homeless - 2024 HB 568 FAV - C

Uploaded by: Vicky Stewart

Position: FAV

HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF
HB 568 - Community Health Worker Appreciation Day

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 28, 2024



Health Care for the Homeless strongly supports HB 568, which would proclaim May 8th as Community Health Worker Appreciation Day and urge educational and cultural organizations to observe community health workers with informative programs and activities.

Community Health Workers are a cornerstone of the care we provide at Health Care for the Homeless and welcome an official day to recognize their critical contributions to the health and well-being of our most vulnerable populations. Here are firsthand accounts of the importance of Community Health Workers from Health Care for the Homeless staff:

Justine Wright, CMA, Community Health Worker, Mobile Clinic

Community healthcare workers are essential in facilitating communication between providers and healthcare organizations, building a trusting relationship with the community they represent, helping people understand their health and social conditions, and advocating for those who need it. As CHWs, we help clients navigate through what is already a challenging time for them as they are experiencing homelessness. We connect them with community resources and provide transportation to various appointments for clients who otherwise would need a way there.

Isaac Epstein, Community Health Worker, Baltimore County

I believe CHW work is particularly important because it addresses SDOH in a way that primary care and case management appointments often cannot. Our work lowers barriers to people who need care most. Case management and primary care are often confined to office settings. This limits the extent of aid one can render to a client. Additionally, the clinical environment and time constraints put patients on edge and makes them feel they don't have the space to address all their needs, which is unfortunately true in many ways.

The work that we do is synergistic with the providers and social workers. Case managers will often provide a list of numbers or resources for clients to access, but have to see their next client before being able to work through all the numbers and applications with the client. As a CHW I have more flexibility with my time to work through these processes with clients. When a provider creates a number of referrals, often patients will not follow up either because they do not know how to navigate scheduling a referral appointment or do not have transport to said appointment. I find that having a close relationship with the physician I am under is extremely important. With the high number of patients most providers see today, I feel that many patients may think of themselves as unseen. In my position I am able to act as a link between the patient and provide because I share a personal relationship with both parties. This leads to more trust with the medical community and I have witnessed that after starting relationships with patients, their adherence habits tend to strengthen and in some cases reach a point where they are independent and responsible enough to stop relying on my services.

We also often fill gaps that are completely unaddressed by any other roles in medical systems. Things like helping patients access shelter, performing housing searches, transporting clients and making home drop offs/home visits have great impacts but are not addressed by any other kind of healthcare professionals. In less than a year, I collected many anecdotes of how without my services clients would be in significantly worse positions: I have found suitable housing for a client days before their housing voucher expired after having not utilized it for 6 years, I have talked someone through suicidal ideation who then started engaging in services with us and subsequently entered a treatment program, I have taken a patient to the emergency room for a septic infection which resulted in amputation, this client would likely not have access the ED if it was not for my encouragement, I have walked a mother and daughter through the process of finding stable housing from living in a hotel, to accessing shelter, to being placed in subsidized housing. In all of these cases I believe that without my services these clients would either have become more chronically street homeless or even have died. While these are some of the more dramatic cases, all of the work we do makes patients feel seen and cared for. While our services may not be billable I feel that the work that we do is deeply appreciated by the people we serve and that it would be missed by them if we were no longer here.

Lawanda Williams, MPH, LCSW-C, Chief Behavioral Health Officer

Community health workers emerge as leaders each and every day. Even amid the challenges presented by a pandemic, community health workers showed up with valor, tirelessly ensuring that vulnerable individuals had access to health care and essential food and medicine. Their dedication not only safeguarded public health but also exemplified the crucial role these frontline workers play in creating resilient, healthy communities. It is imperative that we lift up CHWs and recognize their indispensable contributions. We must find sustainable ways to support such pivotal roles in promoting health equity and community wellbeing.

The importance of CHWs in the health cycle and in health outcomes cannot be overstated. Our clients' lives and health depend on CHWs in the integration of their care. We stand in support of this bill and we urge a favorable report.

Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland's leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We deliver medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, housing support services, and housing for over 11,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County.

Our Vision: Everyone is healthy and has a safe home in a just and respectful community.

Our Mission: We work to end homelessness through racially equitable health care, housing and advocacy in partnership with those of us who have experienced it.

For more information, visit www.hchmd.org.

HB568_MoCoDHHS_Frey_FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Leslie Frey

Position: FWA



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

HB 568

DATE: March 28, 2024

SPONSOR: Delegates Bagnall and R. Lewis

ASSIGNED TO: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT PERSON: Leslie Frey (leslie.frey@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT (Department of Health and Human Services)

Community Health Worker Appreciation Day

House Bill 568 would require the Governor to proclaim May 8th as Community Health Worker Appreciation Day. The proclamation would urge educational and cultural organizations to observe the occasion with information programs and activities. The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services supports House Bill 568 and the important work that Community Health Workers do in our communities, with the suggested amendment to line 18 to substitute “Community Health Worker Day” for “Community Health Workers”.

Community health workers are trusted members of the community with local knowledge and shared life experiences that make them uniquely able to identify problems contributing to health disparities, improve access to health services, and connect people to needed social services.¹ Public health departments, such as the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, community-based organizations, health systems and insurers have increased employment of Community Health Workers, in part to enhance their ability to address social determinants of health, support access to primary and preventive health programs, and reduce unnecessary use of services for conditions that can be managed by primary care among difficult-to-serve populations.² Increased job growth and employment among Community Health Workers reflects the increasing demand for services delivered by Community Health Workers. In 2020, an estimated 64,100 Community Health Workers were employed in the United States. The majority of Community Health Workers are Hispanic (35%), non-Hispanic White (39%), Black (15.5%), and female (82%). The US Bureau of Labor Statistics has projected a 21% increase in Community Health Workers jobs by 2030, a rate of growth much faster than the average for all US occupations (7.7%).³

For these reasons, Community Health Workers deserve to be recognized by the State of Maryland and honored for their contributions to the health and well-being of Marylanders. The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services urges a favorable report of House Bill 568 with the suggested amendment.

¹ Jones, TM, *et al.* Hourly Wages and Turnover of Community Health Workers According to US State Certification Policy and Medicaid Reimbursement, 2010–2021. *American Journal of Public Health* 112, 1480-1488, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2022.306965>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*