



April 4th 2025

HB65

**Community Health Worker Appreciation Day
Education, Energy and Environment Committee
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 65**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

The Community Health Worker Appreciation Day requires the Governor to annually proclaim May 8 as Community Health Worker Appreciation Day. This proclamation encourages educational and cultural organizations to observe the day with informative programs and activities that highlight the invaluable contributions of community health workers. These professionals play a vital role in bridging healthcare gaps, promoting preventive care, and addressing social determinants of health, particularly for underserved and vulnerable populations.

House Bill 65 aligns with the principles of the dignity of work, solidarity, and the common good. Community health workers serve as advocates for health equity, ensuring that all individuals, especially the poor, marginalized, and uninsured—receive essential care and resources. Their work embodies the Church's call to care for the sick and uphold the dignity of every person, reinforcing the moral responsibility to provide equitable healthcare access for all. Recognizing their contributions uplifts their essential work, affirms their dignity, and highlights their role in fostering healthier communities.

At the individual and community level, this legislation fosters greater awareness and appreciation for community health workers, who often operate in challenging environments to ensure that families receive preventive care, health education, and support services. Their efforts reduce health disparities, prevent chronic disease, and strengthen the healthcare system, making communities healthier and more resilient. A dedicated day of recognition brings visibility to their work, encourages support for community health initiatives, and inspires future healthcare workers to serve in these critical roles.

From a policy standpoint, **House Bill 65** emphasizes the importance of investing in community health programs and workforce development. By formally recognizing community health workers, Maryland affirms its commitment to equitable healthcare access and acknowledges the critical role these professionals play in public health infrastructure.

House Bill 65 encourages continued efforts to support, train, and expand the community health workforce, ensuring that more individuals receive the care and education needed to lead healthier lives. This approach is consistent with Catholic values of justice, human dignity, and preferential care for the vulnerable, reinforcing the need for compassionate and accessible healthcare systems that serve all members of society.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **House Bill 65**.