



For Immediate Release

Thursday, December 7, 2023

President Passidomo, Senators Burton and Harrell Announce “Live Healthy” Proposal to Grow Florida’s Health Care Workforce

Legislation Reduces Regulatory Hurdles and Makes Key Investments to Increase Access and Incentivize Innovation

Tallahassee—Florida Senate President Kathleen Passidomo (R-Naples) joined Senator Colleen Burton (R-Lakeland), Chair of the Senate Committee on Health Policy and Senator Gayle Harrell (R-Stuart), Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, to announce the Senate’s Live Healthy proposal. The Live Healthy package of legislation for the 2024 Legislative Session is designed to grow Florida’s health care workforce, increase access, and incentivize innovation.

“Access to health care is important at every phase of life. Insurance does not guarantee access, as even Floridians with great insurance face barriers to care. Live Healthy is a robust package of policy enhancements and strategic investments that will help make sure Florida’s health care workforce is growing at the same pace as the rest of our great state,” said President Passidomo.

“Live Healthy will expand Florida’s health care workforce with new opportunities for education, training and retention. This includes enhancing partnerships between our hospitals and Florida colleges and universities that train health care workers, as well as more residency slots and creative loan repayment options that drive providers to underserved areas. We want to make sure our medical school graduates stay in Florida, and also attract more out-of-state residents – not only for their residencies, but to build their lives and medical practices right here in our communities,” continued President Passidomo. “We are also funding provider increases that incentivize our health care workers to continue serving in needed fields like mental health, labor and delivery, and helping Floridians with disabilities.”

“In recent years, Florida laws have been updated to ensure health care practitioners are able to serve patients to the highest extent of their training. We can never replace the critical role of a physician or specialist; however, medicine – like any other industry – evolves and innovates. Live Healthy maintains rigorous training requirements, but removes regulatory barriers that can get in the way of quality care for patients,” said Senator Burton. “Through Live Healthy, we are expanding sites for clinical training to include more rural, remote, or other locations difficult to access, expanding the role of medical school graduates who have passed the licensing exam and are waiting to be placed in a residency, and reducing barriers for autonomous nurse midwives, while ensuring quality care for mothers and babies.”



“Free-market principles show us that the private sector can innovate in ways government could never imagine. What government can do is facilitate the exploration and implementation of innovative technologies and delivery models that increase efficiency, reduce strain on the health care workforce, improve patient outcomes, expand public access to care, and reduce costs for patients and taxpayers without impacting the quality of patient care,” said Senator Harrell. “Our Health Care Innovation Council will convene experts on the delivery of health care to examine solutions to improve the delivery and quality of health care in our state and develop a loan program to support implementation of innovative solutions.”

“We know that our hospital emergency rooms are the most expensive real estate in our state. Live Healthy will help streamline emergency departments by creating partnerships with Community Health Centers and other primary care settings so care that is urgently needed, but not life threatening, can be handled outside of the hospital emergency room in a more efficient and appropriate setting,” said President Passidomo. “Live Healthy also expands access to preventative health screenings to ensure early diagnosis and better management of chronic disease for all Floridians.”

LIVE HEALTHY OVERVIEW

Legislation for consideration by the Senate Committee on Health Policy

Tuesday, December 12, 2023 – 4:00–6:00 p.m.

- SPB 7016, Health Care, by the Committee on Health Policy, led by Senator Burton, regarding growing Florida’s health care workforce, removing regulations to increase workforce mobility, expanding access to quality, efficient health care (summary below).
 - Appropriation: \$796.7 million (\$384.1 million General Revenue; \$412.6 million Federal Trust Fund.)
- SPB 7018, Health Care Innovation, by the Committee on Health Policy, led by Senator Harrell, regarding incentivizing innovation through technology (summary below).
 - Appropriation: \$76.25 million (\$750 million for loans over 10 years.)

Additional Legislation

To be filed in the coming weeks

- Legislation to create a streamlined pathway for out of state providers moving to Florida
- Legislation to establish a new category of teaching hospitals focused on behavioral health
- Legislation to expand services to Floridians with disabilities
- Legislation to expand health care price transparency



Growing Florida's Health Care Workforce

Health Care Pathway Programs at Lab Schools with University Affiliations

Live Healthy creates a framework for lab schools with university medical school affiliations to develop and implement a model for pathways in health care professions that can be replicated.

- Requires each Florida lab school to develop a program, offer technical assistance to any Florida school district looking to replicate its program, and annually report on the development and results.
- Appropriation: \$2 million recurring GR for lab school articulated health care programs.

Expand GME Residency Slots, Enhance Accountability

Live Healthy expands medical residency slots to increase the number of physicians in Florida. There is a 75% retention rate for physicians who attended medical school and complete their residency in Florida.

- Increases funding for the Slots for Doctors Program with 700 new residency slots.
- Enhances financial transparency and accountability for the Statewide Medicaid Residency Program (SMRP), consistent with recommendations from OPPAGA. Among other requirements, any facility that receives state funds must annually report on each resident position to AHCA.
- Appropriation: \$70 million (\$29.4 million recurring GR; \$40.6 million recurring TF)

Expands Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) Funding

- Expands eligibility for LINE program funding to high-performing independent schools, colleges, or universities who meet performance metrics, including at least a 70% completion rate for CNA programs and at least a 75% NCLEX pass rate for LPN and RN programs.
- Appropriation: \$5 million recurring GR.

Creates the Training, Education, and Clinicals in Health (TEACH) Funding Program

One of the primary barriers to accepting all qualified students at medical, dental, and nursing schools continues to be insufficient clinical placement sites, faculty, preceptors, and classroom space. As enrollment in many health professions programs continues to grow, changes in the health care system are leading to a decline in traditional training sites at hospitals, and schools are partnering with community-based clinics. However, those sites often lack the resources needed to accept students to offer training.

Properly accredited Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) may currently participate in Florida's Statewide Medical Residency Program and receive funding for residency slots, but only 4 are currently participating due to financial barriers to training the medical residents. Expansion of sites for clinical training may help expand services in rural, remote, or other locations difficult to access.



Live Healthy creates the new TEACH funding program to offset lost revenue while clinical preceptors are mentoring medical, dental, nursing, and behavioral health students. The TEACH program seeks to increase the availability of clinical opportunities, improve the quality of the training sites, and promote the clinical training that prepares students to work as qualified and experienced health care professionals.

- Allows qualified entities to apply to the AHCA for funding to offset the administrative costs and loss of revenue associated with maintaining a clinical training program for medical residents, medical students, and APRN, nursing, dental, PA, and behavioral health students.
- Appropriation: \$40 million recurring GR

Removes Barriers for Experienced, Foreign-Trained Physicians to Practice in Florida

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, one of the barriers for Florida medical school students getting into a Florida-based residency is competition from offshore schools paying for clinicals. Overseas medical schools cannot always offer core clinical experiences where they are located. These schools rely on training sites within the United States and pay to place their students in Florida clinicals. This financial incentive has the effect of reducing opportunities for students in Florida schools. Similarly, experienced, foreign-trained physicians still face the burden of having to complete another residency here in Florida before they can earn a license to practice medicine.

Live Healthy removes the unfair advantage for medical students from offshore schools seeking to complete clinical requirements at Florida hospitals, while maximizing opportunities for experienced, foreign trained physicians to become licensed in Florida.

- Prohibits a hospital from taking money from a medical school related to allowing students to obtain clinical hours at the hospital.
- Creates a new pathway for experienced foreign-trained physicians to be exempted from the current residency requirement if they completed a clinical program comparable to a similarly accredited school in the U.S.
- Removes statutory barriers and limits on Florida medical schools hiring experienced, foreign-trained physicians for their faculty.

Expands Florida Reimbursement Assistance for Medical and Dental Education

The Medical Education Reimbursement and Loan Repayment (FRAME) Program was created in 2002, but not funded until 2022-23. Live Healthy expands the FRAME program to incentivize practitioners to stay in Florida after completing their education and training, or medical residency, by providing increased loan repayment for up to 4 years (currently an annual basis). By increasing awards, Florida will be more competitive with other states who offer loan repayment. Health care practitioners must commit to serving Medicaid patients and providing volunteer services.



- Updates and expands Florida’s FRAME program, allowing mental health professionals to qualify, and increasing award amounts for all qualifying health care professionals.
 - Up to \$150,000 over 4 years for medical or osteopathic doctors; up to \$90,000 over 4 years for autonomous APRNs; up to \$75,000 over 4 years for APRNs and PAs; up to \$75,000 over 4 years for mental health professionals (clinical social workers, marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and psychologists); up to \$45,000 over 4 years for RNs and LPNs.
- Expands the dental student loan repayment program to include private dental practices in underserved areas as long as the practice serves Medicaid patients, including allowing dental hygienists to participate with reimbursement up to \$7,500 per year.
- Requires 25 hours of volunteer health services per year to qualify for either the FRAME or the dental student loan program.
- Appropriation: \$50 million recurring GR for FRAME and \$13.2 million recurring GR for FRAME Dental

Removing Regulations To Increase Workforce Mobility

Expands the Areas of Critical Need Program

Live Healthy removes barriers for out-of-state APRNs and PAs to practice in an underserved area through the Areas of Critical Need Program.

- Authorizes the Boards of Medicine, Osteopathic Medicine, and Board of Nursing to issue temporary certificates to PAs and APRNs to practice in areas of critical need, as is currently allowed for physicians.

Establishes Limited Licensure for Graduate Assistant Physicians (GAP)

To expand the workforce and increase access to care, Live Healthy incorporates models from other states that have created limited licensure for medical school graduates who have passed their exams, but have not yet matched into a residency program.

- Creates a new limited license for graduate assistant physicians (GAP) who have passed the United States Medical Licensing Exam but not yet attended a residency program. A GAP may only work under the supervision of a fully-licensed Florida physician.

Reduces Regulations for Autonomous Nurse Midwives

Current law requires an autonomous certified nurse midwife to have a written patient transfer agreement in the case of an emergency. However, nurse midwives have not been able to enter into transfer agreements as those are traditionally between a hospital and another facility, not an individual practitioner.

- Replaces the requirement for a transfer agreement with a requirement to maintain a written policy for the transfer of patients who need a higher level of care or emergency services. The bill includes rules and monitoring provisions.



Expands Telehealth Minority Maternity Care Program

In 2021, the Legislature created the Telehealth Minority Maternity Care Pilot Program in Duval and Orange counties to improve maternal health in minority populations. The program uses telehealth or prenatal home visiting programs, and participants overwhelmingly report high levels of satisfaction. In the 2023-2024, the pilot was expanded to 18 additional counties.

- Expands the existing telehealth minority maternity care pilot program statewide.
- Appropriation: \$23.4 million recurring GR

Reduces Barriers for Psychologists/Psychiatric Nurses to Work in Baker Act Facilities

Current law requires psychologists and psychiatric nurses to have additional years of experience, which restricts their ability to be hired in Baker Act facilities (hospitals and community mental health centers) immediately after licensure. To increase the workforce at Florida's Baker Act facilities, Live Healthy changes these post-licensure clinical requirements.

- Authorizes clinical psychologists and psychiatric nurses to practice to the fullest extent of their education by repealing and reducing experience requirements. Retains the experience requirement for more advanced services performed by a clinical psychologist and requires a psychiatric nurse to practice within an established protocol.

Expanding Access To Quality, Efficient Health Care

Expands Access to Free and Charitable Clinics

Florida's volunteer-driven, non-profit, faith-based, community-based free and charitable clinics offer free primary and urgent care that plays a key role in emergency room diversion. Medical expenses can easily cripple a family's budget, while forgoing preventative care can have severe, long-term consequences that cost far more than routine screenings.

- Live Healthy increases the eligibility threshold to allow more low-income Floridians to access care at these clinics. (200 to 300% of federal poverty level)

Creates a Health Screening and Practitioner Volunteer Portal and Grant Program

Live Healthy creates an online portal health care practitioners can utilize to advertise community events and services. In turn, Floridians can search for free screenings and services in their area.

- Requires the DOH to establish a health screening portal with information on low or no cost health screening opportunities and information for health care practitioners on volunteer opportunities related to such health screenings. (Volunteer hours are required under FRAME outlined above).
- Live Healthy also creates a grant program to support nonprofit entities that are providing no-cost screenings and health services. A nonprofit entity can get a grant to begin providing new services or to expand the area it services.
- Appropriation: \$10 million recurring GR.



Creates Advanced Birth Center Designation

According to a recent March of Dimes report, 12 counties in Florida are maternity care deserts. Live Healthy increases access to maternal care by authorizing an advanced birth center (ABC) to perform low-risk deliveries, including cesarean sections.

- Allows a licensed birth center to be designated an ABC. The ABC must operate continuously; employ two medical directors (an obstetrician and an anesthesiologist); serve Medicaid recipients; and have a written transfer agreement with a nearby hospital or an arrangement with an obstetrician who has admitting privileges at a nearby hospital to accept its patients in case of an emergency.
- Appropriation: \$0.3 million (\$0.15 million nonrecurring GR; \$0.15 million nonrecurring TF) for the AHCA to contract to develop a reimbursement methodology for ABCs.

Seeks Approval for Hospital at Home

Live Healthy directs the AHCA to seek federal approval to include hospital at home as a reimbursable service in the Medicaid program, so Floridians on Medicaid can receive hospital care at home, if appropriate.

- Requires AHCA to seek federal approval to implement a Florida Medicaid acute hospital care at home program, consistent with provisions created during the pandemic.

Requires ER Diversion Plans and Care Coordination

Live Healthy works to create partnerships between hospitals and primary care settings to improve coordination and encourage patients to establish a medical home to prevent future emergency department visits for non-urgent care.

- Requires all hospitals with emergency departments to create a plan for helping patients access appropriate care settings when those patients come to the ER with a non-emergent condition or indicate they lack regular access to primary care.

Expands Mobile Response Teams

A recent review of mobile response team data shows 82% of mobile response team engagement resulted in community stabilization rather than involuntary admission. Live Healthy ensures statewide coverage of mobile response teams (at least one per county) to reduce Baker Acts and unnecessary crisis and emergency hospitalizations.

- Enhancing and expanding mobile response teams to ensure coverage in every county.
- Appropriation: \$11.5 million recurring GR.



Additional Appropriations, Including Rate Increases for Workers Providing Preventative Care and Serving Vulnerable Populations.

- \$195.8 million (\$82.3 million recurring GR; \$113.5 million recurring TF) to provide a uniform Home and Community Based Services Waiver provider rate increase.
- \$100 million in recurring TF to support GME in statutory teaching hospitals that provide highly specialized tertiary care.
- \$34.9 million (\$14.7 million recurring GR; \$20.2 million recurring TF) to provide a Medicaid reimbursement rate increase for dental care services.
- \$29 million (\$12.1 million recurring GR; \$16.9 million recurring TF) to provide a Medicaid reimbursement rate increase for private duty nursing services provided by LPNs and RNs.
- \$34.2 million (\$14.4 million recurring GR; \$19.8 million recurring TF) to provide a Medicaid reimbursement rate increase for OT, PT, and Speech Therapy providers.
- \$22.6 million (\$9.5 million recurring GR; \$13.1 million recurring TF) to provide a Medicaid reimbursement rate increase for Behavioral Analysis Services.
- \$152.3 million (\$64 million recurring GR; \$88.3 million recurring TF) to provide enhanced hospital Medicaid reimbursements rates to support maternal care for moms and babies in labor and delivery.
- \$2.4 million in recurring GR funds to support Behavioral Health Family Navigators in state licensed specialty hospitals providing comprehensive acute care services to children in order to help facilitate early access to mental health treatment.

Incentivizing Innovation Through Technology

Live Healthy harnesses the innovation and creativity of entrepreneurs and businesses together with the state's health care system in order to explore advances and innovations to address real-time challenges and transform the delivery and strengthen the quality of health care in Florida.

- Creates a 15-member Health Care Innovation Council to convene health care experts to explore innovations in technology, workforce, and health care delivery models, and assigns the following responsibilities:
 - Hold public meetings across the state to hear from innovators, developers, and implementers of technologies, workforce pathways, service delivery models, or other solutions, including emerging breakthrough innovations.
 - Annually recognize the most impactful concepts by recognizing work that is helping Floridians to live healthier.
 - On an ongoing basis, develop best practice recommendations, consistent with the continuous modernization of the health care system to keep Florida a nationwide leader in innovation, technology, and service.

The logo consists of the words "LIVE" and "HEALTHY" stacked vertically in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The text is contained within a white rectangular border, which is itself centered on a dark red horizontal bar that spans the width of the page.

LIVE HEALTHY

- Creates a revolving loan program for implementation of innovative solutions.
 - The Council will review applications and recommend prioritized lists of applications for funding, using criteria based on Council findings and focus areas.
 - Applicants may be certain licensed providers, with priority for rural hospitals or nonprofits that accept Medicaid patients in rural or medically underserved areas.
- Appropriates \$75 million in nonrecurring GR for loans (a 10 year investment of \$750 million). and \$250,000 nonrecurring, \$1 million recurring GR for administrative support of the Health Care Innovation Council.

###