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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to community health workers; providing
3 definitions; specifying the duties and activities of
4 community health workers; creating the Community
5 Health Worker Task Force within a state college or
6 university; requiring the Department of Health to
7 provide administrative support; providing membership
8 of the task force; providing duties of the task force;
9 requiring the members of the task force to elect a
10 chairperson; providing that task force members serve
11 without compensation and are not entitled to
12 reimbursement for per diem or travel expenses;
13 requiring that the task force meet at least quarterly;
14 specifying the number of members required for a
15 quorum; requiring the task force to submit a report to
16 the Governor and Legislature by a specified date;
17 providing an effective date.

18
19 WHEREAS, Florida faces a number of challenges in providing
20 access to health care services in both urban and rural areas
21 which impair the health and well-being of state residents, and

22 WHEREAS, Florida continues to experience critical shortages
23 of providers in primary health care, oral health care, and
24 behavioral health care, particularly in rural and inner-city
25 areas, and

26 WHEREAS, there is substantial evidence that comprehensive
27 coordination of care for individuals who have chronic diseases
28 and the provision of information regarding preventive care can

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29 | improve individual health, create a healthier population, reduce
 30 | the costs of health care, and increase appropriate access to
 31 | health care, and

32 | WHEREAS, community health workers, also known as
 33 | "promotoras," and community health representatives, hereinafter
 34 | collectively referred to as "community health workers," have
 35 | demonstrated success in increasing access to health care in
 36 | underserved communities, providing culturally appropriate
 37 | education regarding prevention and disease management, providing
 38 | translating and interpreting services for health care
 39 | encounters, improving health outcomes through the coordination
 40 | of care, increasing individual health care literacy and
 41 | advocacy, and organizing to improve the health care of medically
 42 | underserved communities, while reducing costs in the state's
 43 | health care system, and

44 | WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that community health
 45 | workers are important members of the health care delivery system
 46 | in this state, and the Florida Health Worker Coalition has begun
 47 | to explore options that would allow community health workers to
 48 | be part of an integrated health delivery team, NOW, THEREFORE,

49 |
 50 | Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

51 |
 52 | Section 1. Community health workers.—

53 | (1) As used in this section, the term:

54 | (a) "Community health worker" means a front-line health
 55 | care worker who is a trusted member of or has an unusually close
 56 | understanding of the community that he or she serves.

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57 (b) "Department" means the Department of Health.

58 (c) "Medically underserved community" means a geographic
59 area that has a shortage of health professionals as defined by
60 federal regulations and has a substantial number of persons who
61 lack public or private health insurance, are unable to pay for
62 care, and have incomes at or below 185 percent of the federal
63 poverty level.

64 (d) "Task force" means the Community Health Worker Task
65 Force established by the department under this section.

66 (2) (a) A community health worker serves as a liaison,
67 link, or intermediary between health care services, social
68 services, and the community in order to facilitate access to
69 health care services and improve the quality of health care
70 services and the cultural competency of health care providers.

71 (b) A community health worker performs the following
72 activities in a community setting:

- 73 1. Provides information on available resources;
- 74 2. Provides social support and informal counseling;
- 75 3. Advocates for individuals and their health care needs;

76 and

77 4. Provides services, such as first aid and blood pressure
78 screening.

79 (c) A community health worker also builds individual and
80 community capacity by increasing knowledge in wellness and
81 disease prevention and self-sufficiency through a range of
82 activities, such as community outreach, community education,
83 informal counseling, social support, and advocacy.

84 (d) A community health worker also collects data to help

85 identify health care needs in a medically underserved community
 86 by:

87 1. Serving as a liaison between the community and health
 88 care providers.

89 2. Providing guidance and social assistance to residents.

90 3. Enhancing the communication skills of residents in
 91 order to assist them in effectively communicating with health
 92 care providers.

93 4. Providing culturally and linguistically appropriate
 94 health or nutrition education.

95 5. Advocating for better individual and community health,
 96 including oral health, mental health, and nutritional needs.

97 6. Providing referral services, followup services, and
 98 coordination of care.

99 (3) (a) The department shall establish the Community Health
 100 Worker Task Force within a state college or university. The
 101 department shall provide administrative support and services to
 102 the task force to the extent requested by the chairperson of the
 103 task force and within available resources of the department.

104 (b) The task force shall consist of the following 12
 105 members:

106 1. One member of the Senate, appointed by the President of
 107 the Senate.

108 2. One member of the House of Representatives, appointed
 109 by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

110 3. One state official, appointed by the Governor.

111 4. Six community health workers, appointed by the State
 112 Surgeon General.

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113 5. Three representatives of the Florida Community Health
114 Worker Coalition, appointed by the chair of the Florida
115 Community Health Worker Coalition.

116 (c) The task force shall develop recommendations for:

117 1. Including community health workers in the development
118 of proposals for health care or Medicaid reform in this state as
119 part of the outreach efforts for enrolling residents of this
120 state in Medicaid managed care programs or other health care
121 delivery services.

122 2. Including community health workers in providing
123 assistance to residents in navigating the health care system and
124 providing information and guidance regarding preventive health
125 care.

126 3. Providing support to community health centers and other
127 safety net providers through the integration of community health
128 workers as part of health care delivery teams.

129 (d) The task force shall also collaborate with the Florida
130 Community Health Worker Coalition, colleges and universities in
131 this state, and other organizations and institutions to
132 recommend a process that leads to the standardization of
133 qualifications and skills of community health workers who are
134 employed in state-supported health care programs.

135 (e) The members of the task force shall elect a
136 chairperson and vice chairperson.

137 (f) Members of the task force shall serve without
138 compensation, and are not entitled to reimbursement for per diem
139 and travel expenses.

140 (g) The task force shall meet at least quarterly and at

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141 other times at the call of the chairperson, or as determined by
142 a majority of members.

143 (h) A quorum shall consist of seven members, and the
144 concurring vote of a majority of the members present is required
145 for final action.

146 (i) The task force shall submit a report by June 30, 2013,
147 to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of
148 the House of Representatives, stating the findings, conclusions,
149 and recommendations of the task force.

150 Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.