

By Senator Braynon

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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 and services; providing
8 membership and duties of the task force; requiring the
9 members of the task force to elect a chair and vice
10 chair; providing that task force members serve without
11 compensation and are not entitled to reimbursement for
12 per diem or travel expenses; requiring that the task
13 force meet at least quarterly; specifying the number
14 of members required for a quorum; requiring the task
15 force to submit a report to the Governor and
16 Legislature by a specified date; providing an
17 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
29 improve individual health, create a healthier population, reduce

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30 the costs of health care, and increase appropriate access to
31 health care, and

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

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

47
48 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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50 Section 1. Community Health Worker Task Force.-

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

52 (a) "Community health worker" means a front-line health
53 care worker who is a trusted member of or has an unusually close
54 understanding of the community that he or she serves and who:

55 1. Serves as a liaison, link, or intermediary between
56 health care services, social services, and the community in
57 order to facilitate access to health care services and improve
58 the quality of health care services and the cultural competency

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59 of health care providers.

60 2. Performs the following activities in a community
61 setting:

62 a. Provides information regarding available resources.

63 b. Provides social support and informal counseling.

64 c. Advocates for individuals and their health care needs.

65 d. Provides services such as first aid and blood pressure
66 screening.

67 3. Builds individual and community capacity by increasing
68 knowledge regarding wellness, disease prevention, and self-
69 sufficiency through a range of activities, such as community
70 outreach and education and advocacy.

71 4. Collects data to help identify the health care needs in
72 a medically underserved community by:

73 a. Enhancing the communication skills of residents in order
74 to assist them in effectively communicating with health care
75 providers.

76 b. Providing culturally and linguistically appropriate
77 health or nutrition education.

78 c. Advocating for better individual and community health,
79 including oral health, mental health, and nutritional needs.

80 d. Providing referral services, followup services, and
81 coordination of care.

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

83 (c) "Medically underserved community" means a geographic
84 area that has a shortage of health care professionals and has a
85 population that includes persons who do not have public or
86 private health insurance, are unable to pay for health care, and
87 have incomes at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty

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88 level.

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

91 (2) (a) The department shall establish the Community Health
92 Worker Task Force within a state college or university. The
93 department shall provide administrative support and services to
94 the task force to the extent requested by the chair of the task
95 force and within available resources of the department.

96 (b) The task force shall consist of the following 12
97 members:

98 1. One member of the Senate appointed by the President of
99 the Senate.

100 2. One member of the House of Representatives appointed by
101 the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

102 3. One state official appointed by the Governor.

103 4. Six culturally and regionally diverse community health
104 workers appointed by the State Surgeon General.

105 5. Three representatives of the Florida Community Health
106 Worker Coalition appointed by the chair of the Florida Community
107 Health Worker Coalition.

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

109 1. Including community health workers in the development of
110 proposals for health care or Medicaid reform in this state as
111 part of the outreach efforts for enrolling residents of this
112 state in Medicaid managed care programs or other health care
113 delivery services.

114 2. Including community health workers in providing
115 assistance to residents in navigating the health care system and
116 providing information and guidance regarding preventive health

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117 care.

118 3. Providing support to community health centers and other
119 "safety net" providers through the integration of community
120 health workers as part of health care delivery teams.

121 (d) The task force shall also collaborate with the Florida
122 Community Health Worker Coalition, colleges and universities in
123 the state, and other organizations and institutions to recommend
124 a process that leads to the standardization of qualifications
125 and skills of community health workers who are employed in
126 state-supported health care programs.

127 (e) The members of the task force shall elect a chair and
128 vice chair.

129 (f) Members of the task force shall serve without
130 compensation and are not entitled to reimbursement for per diem
131 and travel expenses.

132 (g) The task force shall meet at least quarterly and may
133 meet at other times upon the call of the chair or as determined
134 by a majority of members.

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

138 (i) The task force shall submit a report by June 30, 2014,
139 to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of
140 the House of Representatives stating the findings, conclusions,
141 and recommendations of the task force.

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