

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 Florida College
6 System institution or state university; requiring the
7 Department of Health to provide administrative support
8 and services; providing membership and duties of the
9 task force; requiring the members of the task force to
10 elect a chair and vice chair; providing that task
11 force members serve without compensation and are not
12 entitled to reimbursement for per diem or travel
13 expenses; requiring that the task force meet at least
14 quarterly; authorizing the task force members to meet
15 in person or by teleconference or other electronic
16 means; specifying the number of members required for a
17 quorum; requiring the task force to submit a report to
18 the Governor and the Legislature by a specified date;
19 providing for future repeal of the task force;
20 providing an effective date.

21
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
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 non-English speakers, improving health
37 outcomes through the coordination of care, increasing individual
38 health care literacy and advocacy, and organizing to improve the
39 health care of medically underserved communities while reducing
40 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 Community Health Worker Coalition
44 has begun to explore options that would allow community health
45 workers to earn a living wage and be part of an integrated
46 health delivery team, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

49
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 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 the
56 health care services or 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
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.
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 to prevent
68 disease and promote health by increasing knowledge regarding
69 wellness, disease prevention, and self-sufficiency among the
70 members of the community through a range of activities, such as
71 community outreach, education, and advocacy.
72 4. Collects data to help identify the health care needs in
73 a medically underserved community by:
74 a. Enhancing the communication skills of members of the
75 community in order to assist them in effectively communicating
76 with health care providers.
77 b. Providing culturally and linguistically appropriate
78 health or nutrition education.

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

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

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

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

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

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

98 (b) The task force shall consist of the following 12
 99 members:

100 1. One member of the Senate appointed by the President of
 101 the Senate.

102 2. One member of the House of Representatives appointed by
 103 the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

104 3. One state official appointed by the Governor.

105 4. Nine culturally and regionally diverse community health
106 workers appointed by the State Surgeon General, three of whom
107 are recommended by the chair of the Florida Community Health
108 Worker Coalition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

130 (f) Members of the task force shall serve without

131 compensation and are not entitled to reimbursement for per diem
132 and travel expenses.

133 (g) The task force shall meet at least quarterly and may
134 meet at other times upon the call of the chair or as determined
135 by a majority of members. Meetings of the task force may be held
136 in person or by teleconference or other electronic means.

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

140 (i) The task force shall submit a report by June 30, 2015,
141 to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of
142 the House of Representatives which states the findings,
143 conclusions, and recommendations of the task force.

144 (3) This section is repealed December 1, 2015.

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