

1                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to community health worker  
3           certification; creating s. 381.989, F.S.; defining  
4           terms; requiring the Department of Health to approve  
5           qualified third-party credentialing entities to  
6           administer voluntary community health worker  
7           certification programs; establishing criteria for the  
8           approval of a third-party credentialing entity;  
9           requiring a third-party credentialing entity to issue  
10          a certification to certain qualified individuals who  
11          meet the grandfathering standards established by the  
12          entity; establishing a maximum fee for such  
13          certification; providing an effective date.

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15           WHEREAS, Florida continues to experience a critical  
16          shortage of health care providers in primary care, oral health,  
17          and behavioral health, particularly in rural and inner-city  
18          areas, and

19           WHEREAS, there is substantial evidence that the  
20          comprehensive coordination of care for individuals who have  
21          chronic diseases and the provision of information regarding  
22          preventive care can improve individual health, create a  
23          healthier population, reduce health care costs, and increase  
24          appropriate access to health care, and

25           WHEREAS, community health workers have demonstrated success  
26          in increasing access to health care in medically underserved

27 communities, providing culturally appropriate education  
28 regarding disease prevention and management, providing  
29 translation and interpretation services for non-English  
30 speakers, improving health outcomes through the coordination of  
31 care, increasing individual health care literacy and advocacy,  
32 and improving the health care of medically underserved  
33 communities, while reducing the overall costs to the state's  
34 health care system, and

35 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that the services  
36 provided by community health workers are an essential component  
37 of the health care delivery system in this state, and

38 WHEREAS, the Florida Community Health Worker Coalition has  
39 begun to develop a voluntary process that will ensure that only  
40 qualified individuals are designated as certified community  
41 health workers by a department-approved third-party  
42 credentialing entity, which will allow community health workers  
43 to earn a living wage and be part of an integrated health  
44 delivery team, NOW, THEREFORE,

45  
46 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

47  
48 Section 1. Section 381.989, Florida Statutes, is created  
49 to read:

50 381.989 Community health workers.—

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

52 (a) "Community health worker" means a frontline health

53 care worker who is a trusted member of, or who has an unusually  
54 deep understanding of, the community that he or she serves and  
55 who meets all of following criteria:

56 1. Serves as a liaison, link, or intermediary between  
57 health care services, social services, or service providers and  
58 members of the community to facilitate access to health care  
59 services and improve the quality of such services and the  
60 cultural competency of health care providers.

61 2. Provides information regarding available resources and  
62 social support and serves as a health care advocate for  
63 individuals in a community setting.

64 3. Builds individual and community capacity to prevent  
65 disease and promote health by increasing knowledge regarding  
66 wellness programs, disease prevention, and self-sufficiency  
67 among the members of the community through a range of  
68 activities, such as community outreach, education, and advocacy.

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

71 a. Assisting members of the community in improving their  
72 ability to effectively communicate with health care providers.

73 b. Providing culturally and linguistically appropriate  
74 health and nutrition education.

75 c. Advocating for improved individual and community  
76 health, including oral health, behavioral health, and nutrition.

77 d. Providing referral services, followup services, and  
78 coordination of care.

79        (b) "Certification" means the voluntary process by which a  
80 department-approved third-party credentialing entity grants a  
81 credential to an eligible individual to practice as a certified  
82 community health worker.

83        (c) "Certified community health worker" means a community  
84 health worker to whom the department-approved third-party  
85 credentialing entity has issued a credential that demonstrates  
86 that individual's mastery of community health worker core  
87 competencies.

88        (d) "Core competencies" means the minimum set of  
89 knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for a community  
90 health worker to carry out his or her work responsibilities.

91        (e) "Department" means the Department of Health.

92        (f) "Grandfathering" means a time-limited process by which  
93 a department-approved third-party credentialing entity grants  
94 community health worker certification to a qualified individual  
95 who was providing community health worker services before the  
96 establishment of the community health worker certification  
97 program as provided in this section.

98        (g) "Medically underserved community" means a community in  
99 a geographic area that has a shortage of health care providers  
100 and a population that includes individuals who do not have  
101 public or private health insurance, are unable to pay for health  
102 care, and have incomes at or below 185 percent of the federal  
103 poverty level.

104        (h) "Recertification" means the biennial renewal of a

105 community health worker certification.

106 (2) THIRD-PARTY CREDENTIALING ENTITIES.—The department  
107 shall approve one or more third-party credentialing entities to  
108 develop and administer voluntary community health worker  
109 certification programs for individuals who provide community  
110 health worker services. A third-party credentialing entity shall  
111 request such approval from the department in writing. In order  
112 to obtain department approval, the third-party credentialing  
113 entity must:

114 (a) Establish professional requirements and standards that  
115 an applicant must achieve in order to obtain a community health  
116 worker certification, including forms and procedures for the  
117 receipt, review, and action upon applications for community  
118 health worker certification and recertification, or to qualify  
119 for grandfathering.

120 (b) Develop and apply core competencies and examination  
121 instruments according to nationally recognized certification and  
122 psychometric standards.

123 (c) Maintain a professional code of ethics and  
124 disciplinary procedures that apply to certified community health  
125 workers.

126 (d) Maintain a publicly accessible database of all  
127 individuals holding a community health worker certification,  
128 which must include any ethical violations committed by an  
129 individual.

130 (e) Require continuing education for recertification or

131 reinstatement of certification of a community health care  
132 worker.

133 (f) Administer a continuing education provider program to  
134 ensure that only qualified providers offer continuing education  
135 to a certified community health worker.

136 (g) Establish a community health worker advisory committee  
137 of at least eight and no more than 15 members consisting of at  
138 least two representatives of the department, five  
139 representatives of the Florida Community Health Worker  
140 Coalition, and up to two representatives of other key  
141 stakeholder organizations identified by the department. Such  
142 members shall be appointed by the organization they represent.  
143 The department-approved third-party credentialing entity may  
144 appoint additional members to the advisory committee.

145 (3) GRANDFATHERING.—Department-approved third-party  
146 credentialing entities shall, for at least 15 months after  
147 implementation of the community health worker certification  
148 program, award a community health worker certification to an  
149 individual who meets the entity's grandfathering standards. The  
150 cost of certification for a grandfathered community health  
151 worker may not exceed \$50.

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