

By Senator Braynon

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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.

14  
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

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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 to  
 49 read:

50 381.989 Community health worker.-

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

52 (a) "Community health worker" means a frontline health care  
 53 worker who is a trusted member of, or who has an unusually deep  
 54 understanding of, the community that he or she serves and who  
 55 meets all of following criteria:

56 1. Serves as a liaison, link, or intermediary between  
 57 health care services or social services or service providers and  
 58 members of the community in order to facilitate access to health

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59 care services and to improve the quality of such services and  
60 the 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 health,  
76 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.

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88       (d) "Core competencies" means the minimum set of knowledge,  
89 skill, and abilities necessary for a community health worker to  
90 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 demonstrate its ability to:

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

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117 receipt, review, and action upon applications for initial  
118 community health worker certification and for recertification,  
119 or to qualify for grandfathering, as that term is defined in  
120 this section.

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

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

130 (e) Require continuing education for recertification or  
131 reinstatement of a community health care worker certification.

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

135 (g) Maintain a community health worker advisory committee  
136 of at least 8 and no more than 15 members consisting of at least  
137 two representatives of the department, five representatives of  
138 the Florida Community Health Worker Coalition, and up to two  
139 representatives of other key stakeholder organizations  
140 identified by the department. Such members shall be appointed by  
141 the organization they represent. The department-approved third-  
142 party credentialing entity may appoint additional members to the  
143 advisory committee.

144 (3) GRANDFATHERING.—Department-approved third-party  
145 credentialing entities shall, for a period of at least 15 months

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146 after implementation of the community health worker  
147 certification program, award a community health worker  
148 certification to an individual who meets the entity's  
149 grandfathering standards. The cost of certification for a  
150 grandfathered community health worker may not exceed \$50.

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