

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       develop and administer voluntary community health  
7       worker certification programs; establishing criteria  
8       for the approval of a third-party credentialing  
9       entity; requiring a third-party credentialing entity  
10      to issue a certification to certain qualified  
11      individuals who meet the grandfathering standards  
12      established by the entity; establishing a maximum fee  
13      for such certification; providing an effective date.  
14

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

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

24       WHEREAS, community health workers have demonstrated success  
25      in increasing patient access to health care in medically  
26      underserved communities, providing culturally appropriate  
27      education regarding disease prevention and management, providing  
28      translation and interpretation services for non-English  
29      speakers, improving health outcomes through the coordination of

36-00293-16

2016244\_\_

30 care, increasing individual health care literacy and advocacy,  
31 and improving the health care of medically underserved  
32 communities, while reducing the overall costs to the state's  
33 health care system, and

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

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

44  
45 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

46  
47 Section 1. Section 381.989, Florida Statutes, is created to  
48 read:

49 381.989 Community health worker.-

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

51 (a) "Certification" means the voluntary process by which a  
52 department-approved, third-party credentialing entity issues a  
53 credential to an eligible individual to function as a certified  
54 community health worker.

55 (b) "Certified community health worker" means a community  
56 health worker to whom the department-approved, third-party  
57 credentialing entity has issued a credential affirming that  
58 individual's mastery of community health worker core

36-00293-16

2016244\_\_

59 competencies.

60 (c) "Community health worker" means a frontline health care  
61 worker who is a trusted member of, or who has an unusually deep  
62 understanding of, the community that he or she serves and who  
63 performs the following functions:

64 1. Serves as a liaison, link, or intermediary between  
65 health care or social services or service providers and members  
66 of the community in order to facilitate patient access to health  
67 care services, improve the quality of such services, and help  
68 make health care providers more culturally aware of the  
69 community served.

70 2. Provides information regarding available resources and  
71 social support and serves as a health care advocate for  
72 individuals in a community setting.

73 3. Builds individual and community capacity to prevent  
74 disease and promote health by increasing knowledge regarding  
75 wellness programs, disease prevention, and self-sufficiency  
76 among the members of the community through a range of  
77 activities, such as community outreach, education, and advocacy.

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

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

82 b. Providing culturally and linguistically appropriate  
83 health and nutrition education.

84 c. Advocating for improved individual and community health,  
85 including oral health, behavioral health, and nutrition.

86 d. Providing referrals, followup, and coordination of care.

87 (d) "Core competencies" means the basic knowledge, skills,

36-00293-16

2016244\_\_

88 and abilities necessary for a community health worker to carry  
89 out his or her work responsibilities.

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

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

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

103 (h) "Recertification" means the biennial renewal of a  
104 community health worker certification.

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

113 (a) Establish professional requirements and standards that  
114 an applicant must achieve in order to obtain a community health  
115 worker certification, including forms and procedures for the  
116 receipt, review, and approval of applications for initial

36-00293-16

2016244\_\_

117 community health worker certification and for recertification,  
118 or to qualify for grandfathering, as that term is defined in  
119 this section.

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 disciplinary  
124 procedures that apply to certified community health workers.

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

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

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

134 (g) Maintain a community health worker advisory committee  
135 of at least 8 and no more than 15 members consisting of at least  
136 2 representatives of the department, 5 representatives of the  
137 Florida Community Health Worker Coalition, and up to 2  
138 representatives of other key stakeholder organizations  
139 identified by the department. Such members shall be appointed by  
140 the organization they represent. The department-approved, third-  
141 party credentialing entity may appoint additional members to the  
142 advisory committee.

143 (3) GRANDFATHERING.—Department-approved, third-party  
144 credentialing entities shall, for a period of at least 15 months  
145 after implementation of the community health worker

36-00293-16

2016244\_\_

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

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