

By Senator Braynon

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2016244__

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.