CHW Sunrise

Dec 16 Testimony

Honorable Chair and members of the Committee of Reference:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent the Community Health Worker, or CHW, Workforce today.

The AzCHOW Sunrise application makes clear the value of the CHW workforce in the delivery of quality health care to Arizonans and I do not want to take valuable time in repeating information that you are already familiar with. We would like to emphasize **we are not seeking licensure** and that there is **no legislation attached** to this proposal. We are seeking your guidance and approval for the process of voluntary certification of Community Health Workers for three major reasons.

**First,** CHW voluntary certification will ensure the integrity of the workforce, both for CHW employers and the patients they serve.

**Second,** CHWs who have been voluntarily certified will have the skills and competencies that are associated both with positive health outcomes of patients, and cost savings for health providers and insurance plans.

* For example, Arizona’s own Health Start Program found that mothers receiving CHW services were more likely to have normal weight babies with a cost savings of $4,000 for the prevention of every low birth weight birth.
* Diabetes patients who receive self-management education and care coordination from CHWs achieve health benefits with a cost savings of six dollars for every dollar spent.

These savings can also be extended to AHCCCS. A CHW community connector program implemented by the Arkansas Medicaid program resulted in a net 3-year saving of two and a half million dollars.

**Third,** Voluntary CHW Certification with help employers identify qualified individuals to ensure positive health outcomes with their patients.

I would like to let the committee members know that several important groups have formally stated their support for CHW voluntary certification and have provided or are prepared to testify to the committee. These group include:

* CHR tribal programs representatives- CHR programs employ 30% of the workforce.
* Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers
* Arizona Local Health Officers Association
* Arizona Association of Health Plans
* Arizona Public Health Association

In addition, several important health care plans, health care providers and Tribal Nations have provided their testimony and support of this effort.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that we have collaborated closely with the Arizona Department of Health Services over the past three years and we feel confident that our proposed process is inexpensive and by using existing structures within ADHS, will cause relatively little additional burden. Because CHWs do not provide direct clinical health care of individuals we are intentionally requesting the lowest level of regulation. Voluntary certification and registration of CHWs will ensure a high quality and well supported workforce without creating undue burden to the system.

Thank you.