

By Senator Jones

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1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to community health workers; providing  
3 definitions; specifying the duties and activities of  
4 community health workers; creating the Community  
5 Health Worker Task Force within a state college or  
6 university; requiring the Department of Health to  
7 provide administrative support; providing membership  
8 of the task force; providing duties of the task force;  
9 requiring the members of the task force to elect a  
10 chairperson; providing that task force members serve  
11 without compensation and are not entitled to  
12 reimbursement for per diem or travel expenses;  
13 requiring that the task force meet at least quarterly;  
14 specifying the number of members required for a  
15 quorum; requiring the task force to submit a report to  
16 the Governor and Legislature by a specified date;  
17 providing an effective date.

18  
19 WHEREAS, Florida faces a number of challenges in providing  
20 access to health care services in both urban and rural areas  
21 which impair the health and well-being of state residents, and

22 WHEREAS, Florida continues to experience critical shortages  
23 of providers in primary health care, oral health care, and  
24 behavioral health care, particularly in rural and inner-city  
25 areas, and

26 WHEREAS, there is substantial evidence that comprehensive  
27 coordination of care for individuals who have chronic diseases  
28 and the provision of information regarding preventive care can  
29 improve individual health, create a healthier population, reduce

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30 the costs of health care, and increase appropriate access to  
31 health care, and

32 WHEREAS, community health workers, also known as  
33 "promotoras," and community health representatives, hereinafter  
34 collectively referred to as "community health workers," have  
35 demonstrated success in increasing access to health care in  
36 underserved communities, providing culturally appropriate  
37 education regarding prevention and disease management, providing  
38 translating and interpreting services for health care  
39 encounters, improving health outcomes through the coordination  
40 of care, increasing individual health care literacy and  
41 advocacy, and organizing to improve the health care of medically  
42 underserved communities, while reducing costs in the state's  
43 health care system, and

44 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that community health  
45 workers are important members of the health care delivery system  
46 in this state, and the Florida Health Worker Coalition has begun  
47 to explore options that would allow community health workers to  
48 be part of an integrated health delivery team, NOW, THEREFORE,

49  
50 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

51  
52 Section 1. Community health workers.—

53 (1) As used in this section, the term:

54 (a) "Community health worker" means a front-line health  
55 care worker who is a trusted member of or has an unusually close  
56 understanding of the community that he or she serves.

57 (b) "Department" means the Department of Health.

58 (c) "Medically underserved community" means a geographic

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59 area that has a shortage of health professionals as defined by  
60 federal regulations and has a substantial number of persons who  
61 lack public or private health insurance, are unable to pay for  
62 care, and have incomes at or below 185 percent of the federal  
63 poverty level.

64 (d) "Task force" means the Community Health Worker Task  
65 Force established by the department under this section.

66 (2) (a) A community health worker serves as a liaison, link,  
67 or intermediary between health care services, social services,  
68 and the community in order to facilitate access to health care  
69 services and improve the quality of health care services and the  
70 cultural competency of health care providers.

71 (b) A community health worker performs the following  
72 activities in a community setting:

- 73 1. Provides information on available resources;
- 74 2. Provides social support and informal counseling;
- 75 3. Advocates for individuals and their health care needs;

76 and

77 4. Provides services, such as first aid and blood pressure  
78 screening.

79 (c) A community health worker also builds individual and  
80 community capacity by increasing knowledge in wellness and  
81 disease prevention and self-sufficiency through a range of  
82 activities, such as community outreach, community education,  
83 informal counseling, social support, and advocacy.

84 (d) A community health worker also collects data to help  
85 identify health care needs in a medically underserved community  
86 by:

- 87 1. Serving as a liaison between the community and health

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88 care providers.

89 2. Providing guidance and social assistance to residents.

90 3. Enhancing the communication skills of residents in order  
91 to assist them in effectively communicating with health care  
92 providers.

93 4. Providing culturally and linguistically appropriate  
94 health or nutrition education.

95 5. Advocating for better individual and community health,  
96 including oral health, mental health, and nutritional needs.

97 6. Providing referral services, followup services, and  
98 coordination of care.

99 (3) (a) The department shall establish the Community Health  
100 Worker Task Force within a state college or university. The  
101 department shall provide administrative support and services to  
102 the task force to the extent requested by the chairperson of the  
103 task force and within available resources of the department.

104 (b) The task force shall consist of the following 12  
105 members:

106 1. One member of the Senate, appointed by the President of  
107 the Senate.

108 2. One member of the House of Representatives, appointed by  
109 the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

110 3. One state official, appointed by the Governor.

111 4. Six community health workers, appointed by the State  
112 Surgeon General.

113 5. Three representatives of the Florida Community Health  
114 Worker Coalition, appointed by the chair of the Florida  
115 Community Health Worker Coalition.

116 (c) The task force shall develop recommendations for:

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117 1. Including community health workers in the development of  
118 proposals for health care or Medicaid reform in this state as  
119 part of the outreach efforts for enrolling residents of this  
120 state in Medicaid managed care programs or other health care  
121 delivery services.

122 2. Including community health workers in providing  
123 assistance to residents in navigating the health care system and  
124 providing information and guidance regarding preventive health  
125 care.

126 3. Providing support to community health centers and other  
127 safety net providers through the integration of community health  
128 workers as part of health care delivery teams.

129 (d) The task force shall also collaborate with the Florida  
130 Community Health Worker Coalition, colleges and universities in  
131 this state, and other organizations and institutions to  
132 recommend a process that leads to the standardization of  
133 qualifications and skills of community health workers who are  
134 employed in state-supported health care programs.

135 (e) The members of the task force shall elect a chairperson  
136 and vice chairperson.

137 (f) Members of the task force shall serve without  
138 compensation, and are not entitled to reimbursement for per diem  
139 and travel expenses.

140 (g) The task force shall meet at least quarterly and at  
141 other times at the call of the chairperson, or as determined by  
142 a majority of members.

143 (h) A quorum shall consist of seven members, and the  
144 concurring vote of a majority of the members present is required  
145 for final action.

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146       (i) The task force shall submit a report by June 30, 2013,  
147 to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of  
148 the House of Representatives, stating the findings, conclusions,  
149 and recommendations of the task force.

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