

CONTACT

National Association of Community Health Workers (NACHW)
Bernadine Mavhungu Jeranyama
bmavhungu@hria.org | 617.279.2257

Congress Recognizes Community Health Workers Through Awareness Week Resolution

(September 29, 2023) **WASHINGTON, D.C.** - This week, Senator Bob Casey, Jr., and Representative Raul Ruiz, M.D. [introduced a resolution](#) designating the week of August 28 - September 1 as “National Community Health Worker Awareness Week.” U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal, Kirsten Gillibrand, Mazie Hirono, and Alex Padilla co-sponsored the resolution in the Senate.

“I am proud to introduce a House Resolution to establish the inaugural National Community Health Worker Awareness Week in partnership with the Senate. It is about time we shine a light on the invaluable contributions of community health workers and promotoras in our communities,” said Rep. Dr. Raul Ruiz. “The “*National Community Health Worker Awareness Week*” resolution will not only recognize the week of August 28th – September 1st as National Community Health Worker Awareness Week but will also underscore the tireless dedication of these essential health workers. Let us acknowledge and appreciate their unwavering commitment to improving the health and well-being of our community members.”

During August 28-September 1, 2023, nearly 80 organizations nationwide participated in the inaugural National Community Health Worker Awareness Week (NCHWAW). The first-ever national campaign of its kind, NCHWAW was created and coordinated by the National Association of Community Health Workers (NACHW) to encourage community health workers and allies across the U.S. to celebrate, commemorate, and collaborate with each other and to raise awareness of the diversity of the community health worker profession, workforce, and movement. Throughout history and around the world, community health workers have used a variety of methods to promote connection, health, and wellbeing within and across individuals, communities, systems, and sectors. For over 60 years, community health workers in the U.S. have advocated and organized to articulate their professional identity and legacy. Yet community health workers’ global history, qualities, roles, and value are still not broadly understood. This resolution by Congress signifies the formal recognition and appreciation of community health workers throughout the U.S. and their invaluable contributions to the pursuit of health and racial equity.

“CHWs are diverse in ethnicity, language, faith, geography, gender and lived experience. Yet many public and private institutions are not aware of CHWs' core roles and unique identities, our histories, or our leadership capacity. NACHW created the NCHWAW campaign to amplify CHW voices and expertise, and to promote policies that respect, protect, and authentically partner with CHWs. The

incredible support we have received from individuals and organizations across the United States, tribal nations, territories and other countries confirms the value and impact CHWs have on health and well-being! CHWs are the workforce we need for the world we want.” -Denise O. Smith, Executive Director, National Association of Community Health Workers.

Community health workers are frontline public health workers who are trusted members of or have an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as a liaison, link, or intermediary between health and social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. Community health workers also build individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy.

Community health worker is an umbrella term and includes Community Health Representatives (CHRs) from tribal nations, Promotoras(es) de Salud, Peers, and hundreds of other workforce titles and frontline public health professionals who share life experience, trust, compassion, and cultural and values alignment with the communities where they live and serve.

“Community health workers are integral to PIH’s model of delivering quality health care and building equitable health systems in the United States and around the world. PIH strongly supports the resolution and National Community Health Worker (CHW) Awareness Week, and we are grateful for the leadership of the National Association of Community Health Workers, Senator Casey, and Representative Ruiz in recognizing CHWs’ extraordinary contributions to the communities they serve,” said Sheila Davis, CEO, Partners In Health.

Through the resolution, Congress recognizes community health workers as a profession and honors the significance of their vital roles in community and public health. Now more than ever, decision-makers must continue to elevate community health workers as an essential workforce whose unique core competencies and positionality are indispensable to the health and wellbeing of the nation. The National Association of Community Health Workers, Partners In Health, and organizations across the country call upon all constituencies, decision-makers, and public and private institutions to respect, protect, and authentically partner with the community health worker workforce. To learn more visit www.nachw.org.

About the National Association of Community Health Workers

Founded in April 2019 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, NACHW is the only national membership driven organization that unifies CHWs across geography, race, ethnicity, sector, experience, and identity to support communities to achieve health, equity, and social justice. NACHW is a national voice for CHWs, including Community Health Representatives (CHRs) from tribal nations, Promotoras(es) de Salud, Peers, and hundreds of other workforce titles. NACHW promotes and advocates for the values of CHW self-determination, integrity, and social justice. We facilitate national and state policy discussions, advance CHW professional identity and authentic workforce integration, and amplify CHW leadership

and capacity. We have over 2,500 members who represent diverse languages, cultures, geographies and lived experiences who hail from all 50 states and a growing number of tribes and territories. NACHW's Executive Director is a CHW, Patient Navigator, and survivor of a rare chronic disease. Our organization is governed by a national Board of Directors of predominantly CHWs, Promotoras(es) de Salud, CHRs from tribal nations, and CHW allies. Our board members have decades of research and practice expertise in CHW training and workforce development; community organizing and engagement; intervention design, equity, and social justice advocacy; and policy leadership.

About Partners in Health

Partners In Health is a nonprofit social justice organization working to bring the benefits of modern medical science to those most in need. For over 30 years, it has a documented history of implementing effective health delivery models in partnership with governments and academic institutions around the world. PIH is advancing health equity in the U.S. by accompanying local leaders to build strong, community-led health systems. Learn more at www.pih.org.



###