



Maryland
Hospital Association

Senate Bill 163: Public Health – Community Health Workers – Advisory Committee and Certification

Position: *Support with amendments*

Bill Summary

SB 163 would establish the State Community Health Worker Advisory Committee; require the Advisory Committee to advise the Maryland Department of Health on certain matters relating to the certification and training of community health workers; require the Department to adopt certain regulations for accrediting community health worker training programs; require the Department to adopt regulations relating to the certification of community health workers; etc.

MHA Position

Maryland's hospital support the creation of a Community Health Worker Advisory Committee to aid in professional development and create a voluntary path to certification.

Under Maryland's All-Payer Model (the waiver), where hospitals are incentivized to provide proactive, preventive care to reduce readmissions, community health workers have taken a more prominent role. Their work in bringing health care outside the four walls of hospitals and directly into communities is fundamental to Maryland's faster-than-the-nation drop in readmissions over the past four years. These employees are usually members of the community in which they work and are a highly trusted member of a patient's health care team.

The next phase of the All-Payer Model is focused on controlling the "Total Cost of Care." This means hospitals will be responsible not only for the cost of care within hospitals, but also among other health care providers that serve the same communities. This will create opportunities for hospitals and other providers to improve patient outcomes and constrain costs by providing the right care in the right setting. This will be achieved through early intervention and prevention strategies, where community health workers will be integral.

Nationally, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects employment for community health workers to grow by 16 percent over the next decade, much faster than the average for all occupations. This demand necessitates a training and accreditation program that reduces the burden on people seeking to become a community health professional.

While hospitals support this bill, we ask for the following considerations:

- The Maryland Hospital Association and at least two hospitals that employ community health workers should have representation on the committee, given hospitals are one of the largest employers of these positions
- Certification should remain voluntary
- The Maryland Higher Education Commission and Department of Labor and Licensing should be part of the advisory committee given its expertise and resources for training

- Criminal background checks should be left up to the discretion of an employer as a condition of employment
- Further consideration of a renewal process should be part of the advisory committee's charge as that issue was not fully discussed with stakeholders over the interim

The development of highly-trained community health workers is key to the ability of Maryland's hospitals to provide patient-centered, proactive care. We ask the committee's further consideration to work on the bill with stakeholders in support of the overall goals of the bill. We would be happy to serve on any stakeholder group as the session progresses to ensure these goals are realized.

For these reasons, we urge you to give SB 163 a *favorable* report with the amendments.

Amendments:

13-3602

Add 1 representative from MHA and 2 representatives from hospitals.
1 rep from DLLR and MHEC each.

13-3604

(2) Fees for the issuance ~~and renewal~~ of certificates and other services;
(4) ~~Criminal background checks required~~ **ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS** for certification;

13-3606

Strike (F).