



Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers

c/o Massachusetts Public Health Association

434 Jamaicaaway, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

March 15, 2010

Dear Legislator,

ORGANIZATIONAL ENDORSERS:

Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.

Boston Association for Childbirth Education (BACE)

Brockton Neighborhood Health Center

Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association

Cambridge Health Alliance

Central Massachusetts Area Health Education Center, Inc. (CM AHEC), Outreach Worker Training Institute (OWTI)

Codman Square Health Center

Community Health Worker Initiative of Boston

Dorchester House Multi-Service Center

Health Care for All

The Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Massachusetts

Henry Lee Willis Center, Worcester

Lowell Community Health Center

Massachusetts Coalition of School-Based Health Centers

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Massachusetts Public Health Association

Mattapan Community Health Center

New England HIV Education Consortium

Prevention and Access to Care and Treatment (PACT) Project, a Boston based, joint program of Brigham and Women's Hospital, and Partners In Health

South End / Lower Roxbury Youth Workers Alliance

SSTAR Health Center, Fall River

The Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers, representing a workforce of 3,000 **community health workers** (CHWs) in the state, respectfully requests your support of **H4130**, an *Act to Establish a Board of Certification of Community Health Workers*. This **cost neutral** bill was originally drafted by CHWs with the support of Representative Gloria Fox and Representative Marie St. Fleur.

CHWs in Massachusetts have voiced support for certification over the last 5 years through discussions and town meetings held by MACHW across the state. Passage of H4130 will **improve standards** and workforce development, and pave the way for potential new funding sources. Certification efforts in several other states, including Texas, Ohio and Alaska, are contributing to national recognition of this emerging workforce, and, in Minnesota, made it possible for CHW services to be **reimbursed through Medicaid**.

The board established by H4130 would be led by CHWs from across the Commonwealth representing the various outreach and navigation roles. Additionally, other public health and health care stakeholders will be on the board, including established community training centers that educate CHWs in the core competencies that define the field. The board will be part of the Division of Health Professions Licensure at MDPH, which strongly supports this legislation. Stakeholders support H4130 because it **improves quality** assurance and cultural competency in health and human services, is aligned with **payment reform** efforts, and is **cost neutral**.

On January 14, 2010, the MDPH CHW Advisory Council released its legislative report, *Community Health Workers in Massachusetts: Improving Health Care and Public Health*, as mandated in health care reform law (Section 110, Chapter 58, Acts of 2006). This investigation found that CHWs **increase access to care**, link people to primary care, **ensure the use of preventive care**, improve cultural competency, and improve self-management of chronic diseases. For example, Holyoke Health Center's diabetes self-management program, which employs CHWs for outreach, education and support, has improved patients' glycemic control and appointment keeping. In Boston, the Prevention and Access to Care and Treatment (PACT) project has shown a decrease in MassHealth costs of 2.4% for HIV/AIDS patients who received CHW interventions.

The MDPH report includes multiple recommendations for building a sustainable workforce, including **financing mechanisms**, such as the inclusion of CHWs as part of patient-centered **medical home teams**. Many of these financing mechanisms, as well as current payment reform discussions, **depend on** this first step: **passing H4130**.

Thank you for considering this bill and the essential role CHWs play in high quality and cost-effective health care in Massachusetts. Please support H4130, an *Act to Establish a Board of Certification of Community Health Workers*.

Sincerely,

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For additional data, research, and publications about CHWs, visit:

<http://www.machw.org/publications.html>