



**An Act Relative to Health Equity and  
Community Health Workers**  
(H.359/S.251)

**Lead Sponsors:**  
Representative Marjorie Decker &  
Senator Robyn Kennedy

### What does this legislation do?

- Requires MassHealth, the Group Insurance Commission (GIC) and commercial health insurance to cover Community Health Worker (CHW) services.
- Establishes a CHW Workforce Development Taskforce to study and make recommendations on issues including funding and reimbursement, roles and employer types, certification barriers, and career pathways.
- Adds navigation and connection to resources, including behavioral health, to the core competencies CHWs need for certification.

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## **Why is this legislation needed?**

- CHW services are not specifically reimbursed by MassHealth, the GIC, or commercial health insurance. Their positions are often funded by grants and other time-limited funding streams.
- There are opportunities to better utilize and support the CHW workforce and help address health care workforce shortages, especially for underserved populations.

## **Who are Community Health Workers?**

- CHWs are front-line public health professionals who use their unique understanding of the experience, language and culture of their communities to share information and facilitate access to health and social services. CHWs are the health equity workforce.
- CHWs serve various roles, such as outreach and referral specialists, community health educators, health coaches, patient navigators, care coordinators and peer advocates in both health care and community-based settings.
- CHWs help people connect to health care services and programs that help with health-related social needs, such as food and housing assistance. During and after the public health emergency, CHWs played a crucial role in increasing vaccine uptake, providing in-home wraparound services and promoting telehealth digital literacy.

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