

# Casey Introduces Legislation to Support Community Health Workers, Improve Health Outcomes

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*Bill strengthens community health workers' ability to meet local needs and promotes inclusion of community health workers in state-run Medicaid programs*

Washington, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) introduced the *Community Health Worker Access Act* to improve local health workers' ability to bridge gaps in health outcomes by improving Medicare coverage for their services, including personalized support for illness prevention and recovery. Additionally, the bill encourages states to cover services provided by community health workers under their Medicaid programs.

**"Community health workers play a critical role in tackling some of Pennsylvania's most important health challenges and helping people overcome barriers to getting the care they need,"** said Senator Casey. **"These frontline health workers are uniquely suited to understand the needs of families and communities. My bill will help continue their critical work connecting Pennsylvanians to care and changing lives."**

**"The CHW Access Act will ensure that Medicare eligible persons have access to the health and social services of a local and trusted Community Health Worker without a copay,"** said Denise Smith, Inaugural Executive Director of National Association for Community Health Workers. **"Health education, referrals, care coordination, navigation and patient advocacy supports from an authentic CHW have proven effective to address food insecurity, management of complex diseases and connects people to social supports that improve their health status and quality of life."**

**"Community health workers are essential to building stronger public health systems and healthier communities. PIH strongly supports the Community Health Worker Access Act, which will allow community health workers to provide holistic, person-centered support to improve the health and wellbeing of Medicare and Medicaid enrollees,"** said Katie Bollbach, Executive Director, Partners In Health United States. **"We are grateful for the leadership of Senator Bob Casey in championing new and sustainable investments in this critical frontline workforce, and we urge Congress to advance this bill without delay."**

Senator Casey believes community health workers are uniquely suited to address some of the most pressing needs of their communities and are essential to reducing hospitalizations. In December 2022, Senator Casey spearheaded the passage of the *Building a Sustainable Workforce for Healthy Communities Act* to reauthorize a competitive grant program to support state and local governments, tribal organizations, and community-based organizations in expanding community health worker programs.

The *Community Health Worker Access Act* would:

- Provide for Medicare reimbursement of community health workers, promotoras, and community health representatives for services to 1) prevent illness, reduce physical or mental disability, and restore an individual to the best possible functional level; and 2) address social needs through education and referrals to health care and community-based organizations.
- Create an optional Medicaid benefit, incentivized by an enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP), to cover preventive services and services to address social needs furnished by community health workers, promotoras, or community health representatives.

The *Community Health Worker Access Act* is supported by more than 200 community health worker networks and public health organizations including the National Association for Community Health Workers, Partners in Health, the Penn Center for Community Health Workers, Families USA, the American Public Health Association, Visión y Compromiso, the National Council of Urban Indian Health, the Primary Care Collaborative, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, and the Rural Community Health Worker Network.

Read more about the *Community Health Worker Access Act* [here](#).

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