

# FACT SHEET



1716 East Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 23223  
804-643-2474 • [www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org](http://www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org)

## Funding For Community Health Workers

### Budget Amendment for Virginia Department of Health for Community Health Workers

Patrons: Delegate Sickles Item 278 #3h  
Senator Aird Item 278 #3s

### Bill (with Budget Amendment)

Patrons: Delegate Sickles, Senator Pillion  
Support HB594 and SB615

**The Problem:** With an infusion of federal funds during the COVID-19 pandemic, Local Health Districts (LHDs) across the State expanded the use of Community Health Workers (CHWs) to address barriers to vaccine access, health literacy, substance abuse and more. *Pandemic-era funding for CHWs is running out. Without action, Virginia could lose the majority of this trusted grassroots public health workforce in 2024.*

### Why Community Health Workers?

A CHW is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of the community. Research has shown that CHWs are uniquely qualified to address the social determinants of health.

Addressing the social determinants of health is essential to making progress on health disparities.<sup>1</sup> A 2023 VDH report identified the important role of CHWs.<sup>2</sup>

### Two-Step Policy solution:

**Support the budget amendment requesting \$6 million over the biennium for the Virginia**

<sup>1</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. 2019. "Beyond Health Care: The Role of Social Determinants in Promoting Health and Health Equity." <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/beyond-health-care-the-role-of-social-determinants-in-promoting-health-and-health-equity/>

<sup>2</sup><https://jchc.virginia.gov/documents/2023%20Nov%20LHD%20presentations.pdf>

### Department of Health to disburse to local health departments, earmarked for community health workers.

Preserve existing community health benefits by maintaining access to 100+ state-employed Community Health Workers at risk of losing their jobs beginning July 1, 2024.

To ensure long-term sustainability, pass a bill to create a process and a timeline for Medicaid to reimburse for CHW services.

**Costs:** Effective CHW programs can save money. A growing body of literature has found that Community Health Workers lower health care costs and provide a return on investment.<sup>3</sup> According to a Virginia Department of Health Community Health Worker Workforce Funding Assessment survey, at least 112 CHW jobs connected to LHDs are in danger. To support the 112 positions, a yearly sum of 5,588,000<sup>4</sup> is required for salaries and an additional \$286,272 for computer rental, cell phones and supplies.

**Who benefits:** Community health workers are a cost-effective and evidence-based way to improve health outcomes in a community. CHWs are an entry point for a health workforce pipeline. Amid rising shortages in the healthcare sector, we must support a profession that is a pathway to nursing.

<sup>3</sup> Kangovi S, Mitra N, Grande D, Long JA, Asch DA. Evidence-Based Community Health Worker Program Addresses Unmet Social Needs And Generates Positive Return On Investment. *Health Affairs*. 2020;39(2):207-213. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2019.00981>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes211094.htm>