
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that community health
2 workers connect rural, underserved communities with programs and
3 services that impact social determinants of health and address
4 factors such as access to health care, prevention, outreach, and
5 training. Community health workers often serve in rural,
6 underserved communities and spend a significant portion of their
7 time doing telehealth and behavioral health, outreach such as
8 assisting individuals to apply for medical insurance, providing
9 health education resources, and locating work opportunities.
10 Community health workers may also serve as translators,
11 assisting their communities to navigate health care and social
12 service systems.

13 The legislature further finds that there is a great need
14 for community health workers, especially in rural and
15 underserved communities that do not have reliable access to
16 health education resources or job opportunities. As a critical
17 intermediary between residents and health care and social



1 services, community health workers have a unique understanding
2 of their community needs and accessibility to services.
3 Establishing a pilot program for community health workers with
4 clear parameters, including major responsibilities and scope of
5 work, will allow community health workers to continue their
6 valuable work in communities statewide.

7 Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to establish a three-
8 year rural community health worker pilot program to provide
9 outreach, education, training, and navigation to individuals
10 residing in rural communities and address social determinants of
11 health.

12 SECTION 2. (a) The department of health shall establish
13 and administer a three-year rural community health worker pilot
14 program for community health workers to provide outreach,
15 education, training, and navigation to individuals residing in
16 the State's rural communities and address social determinants of
17 health.

18 (b) Community health workers participating in the rural
19 community health worker pilot program may provide health
20 education and outreach, individual support and assistance,



1 cultural competency and advocacy, and data collection and
2 reporting within the State's rural communities.

3 (c) Services offered by community health workers pursuant
4 to subsection (b) shall meet the following requirements:

5 (1) Health education and outreach shall include:

6 (A) Health education programs that promote health
7 awareness, disease prevention, and healthy
8 lifestyle practices; and

9 (B) Information on health care services, resources,
10 and programs that are available to rural
11 community members;

12 (2) Individual support and assistance shall include:

13 (A) Assistance to individuals in navigating the
14 health care system, including accessing health
15 care facilities, appointments, and follow-up
16 care; and

17 (B) Guidance and support for individuals in managing
18 chronic conditions, medication adherence, and
19 lifestyle modifications for improved health
20 outcomes;

21 (3) Cultural competency and advocacy shall include:



1 (A) Cultural sensitivity and competence during
2 interactions with diverse populations within a
3 rural community; and

4 (B) Advocating for the health needs and concerns of
5 rural community members to health care providers,
6 institutions, and policymakers; and

7 (4) Data collection and reporting shall include:

8 (A) Maintenance of accurate records of educational
9 activities and individual interactions; and

10 (B) Submission of periodic reports on rural community
11 health trends, needs, and program effectiveness
12 to relevant health authorities or agencies.

13 (d) The department of health shall enter into a contract
14 with a nonprofit organization to recruit, train, assign, and
15 supervise community health workers and oversee the pilot
16 program. The nonprofit organization contracted under this
17 subsection shall have:

18 (1) A history of providing community empowerment, capacity
19 building, collaborative partnerships, and health
20 education to the State's rural communities;



1 (2) The knowledge and experience necessary to provide
2 community health worker services to program
3 participants;

4 (3) The capacity to provide culturally competent training
5 and services; and

6 (4) A board of directors and staff team consisting of a
7 majority of residents who currently reside in a rural
8 community in the State.

9 (e) Existing department of health personnel may be
10 assigned to fulfill administrative and fiscal responsibilities
11 of the rural community health worker pilot program.

12 (f) The department of health, in conjunction with the
13 nonprofit organization contracted under subsection (d), shall
14 submit interim reports on the development and administration of
15 the rural community health worker pilot program, including any
16 proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty
17 days prior to the convening of the regular sessions of 2026,
18 2027, and 2028. Each interim report shall include a record of
19 pilot program activities and accomplishments, including:

20 (1) Outreach and training of community health workers; and



1 (2) Services provided to program participants by a
2 community health worker.

3 (g) The department of health shall submit a final report
4 on the rural community health worker pilot program, including
5 any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than
6 twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of
7 2029. The final report shall include:

8 (1) A record of pilot program activities and
9 accomplishments, including:

10 (A) Outreach and training of community health
11 workers; and

12 (B) Services provided to program participants by a
13 community health worker; and

14 (2) A recommendation on whether to extend the pilot
15 program beyond three years.

16 (h) As used in this section:

17 "Community health worker" means a frontline health worker
18 who is a trusted member of the community in which the community
19 health worker lives, is from the community, or who has an
20 unusually close understanding of the community served that
21 enables the community health worker to:



- 1 (1) Build trusted relationships;
- 2 (2) Serve as a liaison between health care and social
- 3 services and the community;
- 4 (3) Facilitate access to services; and
- 5 (4) Improve the quality and cultural competence of service
- 6 delivery.

7 "Program participant" means a resident of a rural community
8 in the State who requests services by a community health worker
9 through the rural community health worker pilot program.

10 "Rural" means an area that is currently served by a
11 critical access hospital as defined in section 346-1, Hawaii
12 Revised Statutes.

13 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
14 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
15 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and
16 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
17 year 2026-2027 for the rural community health worker pilot
18 program established pursuant to section 2 of this Act.

19 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
20 of health for the purposes of this Act.

21 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.



H.B. NO. 688

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INTRODUCED BY:

Jeanette

JAN 17 2025



H.B. NO. ~~688~~

Report Title:

DOH; Community Health Workers; Rural Community Health Worker Pilot Program; Preventive Services; Social Determinants of Health; Appropriation

Description:

Requires the Department of Health to establish and administer a three-year Rural Community Health Worker Pilot Program that enables community health workers to provide outreach, education, training, and navigation to individuals residing in rural communities in the State and address social determinants of health. Appropriates funds.

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