

Support Establishment of Certification Board of Community Health Workers

VOTE YES FOR H 4130

Sponsored by Representative Gloria Fox

About H4130:

- **Establishes a Board of Certification** of community health workers (CHWs) within the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.
- **Budget neutral.** The board would be a self sustaining and cost neutral body.
- **Board improves clarity of CHW role.** Sets standards and certification process for the workforce and CHW training and education programs.
- H4130 is currently **on the House calendar.**

Why H4130 needs to pass this session!

- **Health reform is strengthened by well prepared community health workers.** CHWs are recognized in both national and Massachusetts health reform legislation as health professionals who play important roles in health care delivery and public health systems. Research supports their effectiveness in health care and public health teams.¹
- **Board improves quality of care for vulnerable populations.** A certification board will improve the quality of services by ensuring a trained, competent workforce.
- **MA cannot afford to delay process by another 2 years.** The board needs to be established now to ensure a well-trained workforce to reduce health care costs, improve health outcomes, address health disparities and improve the effectiveness of chronic disease management efforts.
- **CHW workforce supports certification and its benefits.** To be most effective, CHWs need wider understanding of their role, greater access to training, more respect, and living wages.
- **Strong support from MA Department of Public Health.** In January 2010, Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Community Health Worker Advisory Council released its legislative report for building a sustainable workforce, emphasizing the establishment of a board of certification.



H4130 is the essential next step for improving the quality and standards of the community health worker workforce.

For more information contact Cindy Marti, Policy Director of the Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers at (617)524-6696 ext 108 or cmarti@mphaweb.org.

¹ *Community Health Workers in MA: Improving Health Care and Public Health*, Massachusetts Department of Public Health Community Health Worker Advisory Council, released to legislature on January 14, 2010.

VOTE YES ON “CERTIFICATION”

LANGUAGE AMENDMENT:

The Joint Committee on Health Care Financing includes the word “licensure” in amendment H4692.

Rep. Fox has filed a further amendment to replace the word “licensure” with “certification.”

- Community health workers support certification, not licensure.
- Certification, not licensure, was approved by the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure.
- Certification will set standards to strengthen quality assurance for the field without posing undue barriers for entry from diverse communities.
- Licensure would require levels of education and training unnecessary for the non-clinical nature of CHW work.
- Licensure would be more expensive for community health workers as well as for their employers, compared to certification.
- Licensure would narrow access to and over-professionalize the field.
- Licensure could create economic and institutional barriers that would limit the diversity of the workforce.