



April 18, 2023

House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee
Colorado General Assembly
200 E. Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of the Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials (CALPHO), we respectfully submit this letter of support for SB23-002: Medicaid Reimbursement For Community Health Services.

CALPHO is the professional association representing the leadership, staff, and partners of Colorado's 55 local public health agencies (LPHAs). CALPHO is an essential, non-profit partner coordinating LPHAs and other public health partners to create a constructive and collegial environment that fosters an effective and efficient public health system.

The Association is in strong support of SB23-002, understanding the critical link that Community Health Workers provide in their local areas ensuring that Coloradans have access to the health and social programs that will improve their overall health and empower them with the skills needed to successfully navigate our complex healthcare system. And in terms of the impact on our healthcare system, it is common knowledge that individuals who have access to preventive healthcare services and sustained chronic disease management reduce the staffing and financial burden on the system, particularly Medicaid.

Additionally, we view the bill as a key workforce development tool to help address the long-standing workforce shortages public health has faced that began years before the COVID-19 pandemic due to chronic underfunding. The pandemic exacerbated these issues and agencies across the state saw mass staff departures at both the executive and entry levels, which further exposed the fragility of our current public health system. And it is a strategic policy priority for CALPHO to build and support entry-level engagement programs that will develop the future public health leaders in the state, which SB23-002 will do.

Our members have already seen success with utilizing Community Health Workers through innovative programs like Colorado Public Health Works, which is an AmeriCorps Apprenticeship program providing a career entry pipeline into the field along with the opportunity to pursue certification as a Community Health Worker for individuals aged 17-25 from local communities throughout the state.

And on behalf of CALPHO's membership, we would like to thank Speaker McCluskie and Representative Bradfield for introducing this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

Michael Crews
CALPHO Policy Director

1999 Broadway, Suite 600
Denver, CO 80202
(303) 861-4995



April 18, 2023

The Honorable Dafna Michaelson-Jenet
Chair, House Committee on Public and Behavioral Health and Human Services
HCR 0107
200 E. Colfax Ave
Denver, CO 80203

RE: SB23-002- Medicaid Reimbursement for Community Health Services - SUPPORT

Dear Representative Michaelson-Jenet,

Susan G. Komen is pleased to support Senate Bill 002, which relates to Medicaid reimbursement of Community Health Workers (CHWs).

Komen is the world's leading nonprofit breast cancer organization representing the millions of people who have been diagnosed with breast cancer. Komen has an unmatched, comprehensive 360-degree approach to fighting this disease across all fronts—we advocate for patients, drive research breakthroughs, improve access to high quality care, offer direct patient support and empower people with trustworthy information. We advocate on behalf of the estimated 4,910 people in Colorado who will be diagnosed with breast cancer and the 690 who will die from the disease in 2023 alone.

CHWs are trusted public health workers that help to empower and guide patients to overcome barriers and ensure a seamless, high-quality breast health journey in an otherwise fragmented system. They have the potential to improve not only the quality of life of breast cancer patients, but also clinical outcomes and to reduce health care costs. Expanding the use of CHWs in Medicaid is critical to reducing health disparities for our most vulnerable communities.

This legislation will enable Medicaid reimbursement for services provided by CHWs by leveraging existing systems at the Colorado Department of Public Health of Environment. This model will be developed in partnership with CHWs, advocates, public health agencies and healthcare professionals across the state to ensure effective implementation. Currently, 25 states allow for Medicaid billing of CHW services.

As the leader in the fight against breast cancer, we know how deeply important it is to reduce health disparities, improve health outcomes and lower health care costs for our most vulnerable communities. As such, we support SB23-002 and urge you to pass this critical legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

Christine Fallabel, MPH

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christine Fallabel".

Madam Chair, Members of the Committee, my name is Carol Pace. I am a volunteer with AARP Colorado. AARP has over 670,000 members in Colorado and is focused on Coloradans age 50 and above, and their families.

AARP supports SB 23-002, Medicaid Reimbursement for Community Health Services

Colorado has nearly a third of its population aged 50 years and over. With increased health care needs, older adults with Medicaid coverage could benefit significantly from community health worker services, while advancing a cost-effective health care model.

AARP research continues to show that the large majority of older adults want to “age in place,” or stay in their homes as they age. Surveys highlight, though that “aging in place” requires health care access, caregivers and other support systems. Community health workers could contribute to needed community support systems

As has been identified, 15 other states are successfully using programs similar to that proposed in this bill. Analysis by KFF¹ describes community health workers as:

Frontline workers who have close relationships with the communities they serve, allowing them to better liaise and connect community members to health care systems. They often share life experiences, language, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity with members of the communities in which they work, allowing them to foster greater trust between community members and the health care system.

Older adults may benefit from services which may include care coordinators, health educators, patient navigators, and outreach and enrollment facilitators. Services may include culturally appropriate health promotion and education, assistance in accessing medical and non-medical services, translation services, care coordination, patient advocacy, home visits, and social support.

Community health worker services may in particular enhance opportunities for older Coloradans, improving health outcomes, as well as overall increasing health care cost-effectiveness.

We ask that the committee support SB 23-002.

Respectfully, Carol Pace, AARP Volunteer Advocate

¹ Sweta Haldar and Elizabeth Hinton, “State Policies for Expanding Medicaid Coverage of Community Health (CHW) Worker Services,” KFF (January 2023), <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/state-policies-for-expanding-medicaid-coverage-of-community-health-worker-chw-services/> (2-22-23).



Members of the House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee,

My name is Jillian Fabricius, and I am Deputy Director with Illuminate Colorado, a statewide nonprofit working to strengthen families, organizations, and communities to prevent child maltreatment. I am submitting written testimony **to ask you for a yes vote on SB23-002 Medicaid Reimbursement For Community Health Services.**

When families have access to community health services that promote wellbeing, we strengthen the foundation for families and communities to thrive.

Illuminate supports SB23-002 for two main reasons:

1. **SB23-002 would establish sustainable funding for vital community health services that promote protective factors to prevent child maltreatment.** Research has shown that building parental resilience, a protective factor, has the power to prevent and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.¹ When parents experience chronic stress, it can become toxic stress, impacting their ability to respond to their child's needs. Community health workers (CHWs) provide services that have been shown to reduce symptoms for people impacted by mental health concerns and substance use.² CHWs play a vital role in promoting parental resilience, preventing child maltreatment. This bill would create a sustainable funding source for CHWs, increasing families' access to these vital services.
2. **SB23-002 would increase funding for CHW services, which have been shown to promote health equity.** People of color experience reduced access to prenatal care, and Black and indigenous people experience disproportionately high rates of pregnancy-related death.³ Research shows that, by providing social support and reducing barriers to care, CHW services increase access to and utilization of prenatal care.⁴ This bill would increase health equity by ensuring those experiencing barriers to care have access to impactful CHW programs that promote infant and maternal health and wellbeing.

In closing, when families have access to sustainably funding community health services, we strengthen the foundations of families and communities to thrive. **We urge you to support Medicaid reimbursement for community health workers by voting 'yes' on SB23-002.**

Sincerely,

Jillian Adams Fabricius, Deputy Director

jfabricius@illuminatecolorado.org

¹ Center for the Study of Social Policy. (n.d.) About Strengthening Families and the protective factors framework. Retrieved From: <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/protective-factors-framework/>

² Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission. (2022). Medicaid Coverage of Community Health Worker Services. Retrieved From: <https://www.macpac.gov/publication/medicaid-coverage-of-community-health-worker-services/>

³ KFF. (2022). Racial disparities in maternal and infant health: Current status and efforts to address them. Retrieved From: [https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/racial-disparities-in-maternal-and-infant-health-current-status-and-efforts-to-address-them/#:~:text=Black%20and%20AIAN%20women%20have,births\)%20\(Figure%201\)](https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/racial-disparities-in-maternal-and-infant-health-current-status-and-efforts-to-address-them/#:~:text=Black%20and%20AIAN%20women%20have,births)%20(Figure%201))

⁴ McCue, K., Sabo, S., Wightman, P., Butler, M., Pilling, V., Jiménez, D., Annorbah, R., & Rumann, S. (2022). Impact of a Community Health Worker (CHW) Home Visiting Intervention on Any and Adequate Prenatal Care Among Ethno-Racially Diverse Pregnant Women of the US Southwest. *Maternal and child health journal*, 26(12), 2485–2495. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-022-03506-2>

Please Support SB23-002 Community Health Services

Onnastasia Cole, Young Invincibles

Thank you House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services committee members for your time today. My name is Onnastasia Cole (pronouns she/her), and I am a Policy Advocate with Young Invincibles. I am here today to testify on behalf of Young Invincibles and young adults in our network to support SB23-002, Expand Access to Community Health Workers.

Every day, young adults in Colorado are struggling to navigate our complex healthcare system, making it difficult (if not impossible) to access needed prevention services, chronic disease management, and culturally responsive care. This not only negatively impacts long-term health outcomes but also mental health, which is a growing problem in our state.

This bill provides an opportunity to expand access to Community Health Workers (CHWs) for patients and community members across Colorado by enabling Medicaid reimbursement for some of the services CHWs provide, including connecting patients to community based-services that address social determinants of health. CHWs play a key role connecting young adults to needed services and achieving health equity in Colorado. The benefits of CHWs are well documented. For example:

- Evidence shows that CHWs can help improve healthcare access and outcomes, strengthen healthcare teams and enhance quality of life for people in low-income, underserved and diverse communities.
- Many interventions that integrate CHWs into health care delivery and public health systems are associated with reductions in chronic illnesses, better medication adherence, increased patient involvement, improvements in overall community health and reduced healthcare costs.
- Researchers in Pennsylvania found that Community Health Workers yielded Medicaid a return of \$2.47 for every dollar invested.

As we continue to grapple with the long-term impacts of COVID-19, it's more important than ever to ensure young adults have access to healthcare services while cutting unnecessary costs. I hope you will join Young Invincibles in supporting SB 23-002 so every young adult in Colorado has the support they need to thrive. Thank you.