



FIGHTING *for* PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES

The Community Health Worker Access Act

U.S. Senator Bob Casey

Prevention can improve health outcomes and reduce health spending

According to an estimate in *The Lancet Public Health*, [more than a quarter](#) of health care spending is associated with preventable diseases. A disproportionate share of the preventable disease burden is experienced by members of underserved communities. The COVID-19 pandemic [highlighted](#) health disparities in communities across the country and effective strategies to address them—including the deployment of community health workers, promotoras, and community health representatives. This longstanding workforce can improve health outcomes through prevention, trusted relationships, and a deep understanding of local and individual needs.

Community health workers are an effective, high-value workforce

Community health workers (CHWs), promotoras, and community health representatives (CHRs) bridge gaps in health outcomes by promoting positive health behaviors and improving access to services supporting physical and mental health. Recruited from their communities, they can provide personalized support to help their clients avoid illness—reducing health spending. A [randomized controlled](#) trial found that one program with evidence-based management practices yielded a return of \$2.47 for every dollar invested and that community health workers could save Medicaid \$4,200 per beneficiary each year. Other studies have shown that CHWs can [improve chronic disease control and mental health](#), [promote healthy behavior](#) and [reduce hospitalizations](#).

The Community Health Worker (CHW) Access Act

The CHW Access Act would improve Medicare reimbursement for CHWs, promotoras, and CHRs and support their integration into Medicaid by—

- Providing Medicare reimbursement for CHW, promotora, and CHR 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.
- Creating 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 CHWs, promotoras, or CHRs.

The CHW Access Act is supported by over 200 CHW networks, CHW/P/CHR employers, 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.