

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Suenelly Cortes, and I am writing in support of House Bill H8211 and the continued investment in Rhode Island's Community Health Worker workforce.

As a former CEO of a community-based organization serving vulnerable populations throughout Rhode Island, I have personally witnessed the life-changing impact Community Health Workers have on individuals, families, and entire communities.

Over the course of one year, our organization helped stabilize more than 86 individuals and families facing barriers related to housing instability, healthcare access, transportation, food insecurity, and lack of community support. Through the work of Community Health Workers, we were able to assist individuals experiencing homelessness, connect patients to medical providers and essential services, provide transportation to appointments, distribute food and clothing resources, and help community members better understand their rights and available resources.

Community Health Workers serve as a bridge between healthcare systems and the people who often struggle the most to access care. Many patients do not fully understand how to navigate complex healthcare systems, apply for benefits, advocate for themselves, or access preventive services. CHWs meet people where they are and provide culturally responsive, compassionate support that builds trust and improves outcomes.

Our work also helped reduce unnecessary hospital visits by supporting patients before situations escalated into emergencies. We helped individuals remain connected to care, remain housed, and maintain greater stability in their lives.

In addition to healthcare navigation, Community Health Workers strengthen communities by providing emotional support, advocacy, education, care coordination, and connection to critical resources that improve overall wellbeing.

House Bill H8211 represents an important opportunity to recognize, strengthen, and sustain the CHW workforce across Rhode Island. Investing in Community Health Workers is an investment in prevention, health equity, and stronger communities.

I respectfully urge your support of this legislation and continued recognition of the essential role Community Health Workers play throughout our state.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and consideration.

Respectfully,

Suenelly Cortes and Team  
Empower Community Health Services  
Providence, Rhode Island

*Suenelly Cortes*

vice president

***Empower Community Health Services***

CCHW, CHW, CMA, PBT

O. 401-425-1000

E. [s.cortes@empowercommunityhealthservices.com](mailto:s.cortes@empowercommunityhealthservices.com)