



Washington County Coalition for Children

To: Chair Rep. Susan Donovan and the House Health & Human Services Committee

Date: March 19, 2024

RE: **Support for H7879 Private Insurance Coverage for CHW Services**

I write on behalf of the Washington County Coalition for Children in strong support of H7879 requiring private insurance plans to include coverage for all services provided by Community Health Workers.

Community Health Workers (CHWs) provide vital services, not only to individual patients, but to communities and health care systems as well. The role of CHWs is unique as they function at both the micro and macro levels to solve problems and improve the health of people as well as their communities. CHWs work in many capacities and in numerous sectors, including primary care, specialty medical care, behavioral health care, schools, social service agencies, community action agencies, food pantries, and more. CHWs, who are state certified, are trusted members of the community they serve, often sharing something in common with the people they serve (i.e. place, race, ethnicity, health condition, parent, etc.). CHWs serve as community ambassadors, facilitating needed services, improving the quality and culture competence of service delivery, and connecting the dots in understanding to spark needed community change. In a word, **community health workers are AMAZING!**

As vital as CHWs are, **funding for these positions is tenuous at best**. While the state has implemented a State Plan Amendment to allow CHWs to bill Medicaid for their services, **most CHW positions are funded through federal and foundation grants**. As a result, funding for these vital roles comes and goes. In fact, **many of these grants are slated to expire this year** and will result in the loss of a valuable part of the state's public health infrastructure that was so critical during the throws of the COVID 19 pandemic. H7875 will allow CHWs to bill for their micro-level work with individual patients, conducting health and promotion coaching, providing health education and training, facilitating health system navigation, as well as offering resource coordination services, care planning and follow-up care recommendations.

While this legislation will not provide all the funding needed to sustain CHW positions, **private insurance reimbursement is part of the funding solution**. I urge you to **pass H7875**.

Sincerely,

Director

Washington County Coalition for Children • Website www.washcokids.org
Phone 401-788-2347 • Email wccc@washcokids.org