



Testimony of
Lilian Amaya
Lead Community Health Worker
Health Care for the Homeless

before the

Maryland Senate: Committee on Finance

on

SB 0163: Public Health – Community Health Workers – Advisory Committee and Certification

February 1, 2018
Annapolis, Maryland

Good afternoon Mister Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Lilian Amaya, and I am the lead Community Health Worker at Health Care for the Homeless in Baltimore. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of SB 0163.

Health Care for the Homeless is a federally qualified health center that works to move people experiencing homelessness from crisis to stability. Our work is rooted in a whole-person approach and trauma-informed care. As the lead of my team of five, I've seen the importance for our roles in coordination of care and keeping clients engaged. What we do as Community Health Workers is all in the name. We link our community to services that support their health. I'd like to share some quick examples of the work we have done to support care for clients:

- One of my clients is an unaccompanied 16 year old who receives behavioral and medical health care at Health Care for the Homeless and works with our pediatric social worker. She hadn't attended school in several months due to medical issues and didn't feel welcomed in her school environment. With the support of an attorney, we advocated for her to change schools, and now she's back in a new school while she continues to receive health services.
- A Community Health Worker on my team has been working with an elderly woman with Alzheimer's. The client was previously in an abusive relationship, but after leaving a local shelter, Adult Protective Services placed her in an assisted living facility. The client felt comfortable with her Community Health Worker and shared that the manager of the facility had threatened to harm her. Together, we developed a safety plan and moved her to a facility where she is safe and welcomed.
- Another member on my team reached out to an ER follow up client who she had worked with a long time ago. When the Community Health Worker called to schedule a seven-day medical follow up, the client was so happy to hear from her and informed her that she's in a substance abuse treatment program, housed, and recently reconnected with her daughter.

These are just a few examples, but homelessness is an experience that spans populations, communities, and cultures. It is because of the creation and growth of our team that we've been able to reach so many individuals. For a while, Health Care for the Homeless has had a phenomenal outreach team. However, without the Community Health Worker role, there was a gap between initially connecting clients through outreach and maintaining care. Community Health Workers have played a vital role in bridging that gap.

Since our team of Community Health workers was created this past October 2017, we've worked with 219 clients and engaged with them over 700 times. As our team of Community Health Workers and those across Maryland continue to grow, it is essential to have standards and qualifications that ensure that all clients receive quality care. While the experiences of individuals experiencing homelessness are varied, the quality of the providers they interact with should be consistent. SB 0163 has the potential to ensure all Community Health Workers in this state are provided with the training, skills, and recognition needed to be effective.

By supporting SB 0163, you're supporting those 219 people, and so many others, by giving them the ongoing care to create a healthy, sustainable future. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today, and I am happy to answer any questions.