



YOUTH ALIVE!
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ANNE MARKS

June 17, 2022

The Honorable Richard Pan
Chair, Senate Health Committee
1021 O Street, Room 3310
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 2697 (Aguiar-Curry): Community Health Workers – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Pan,

On behalf of Youth ALIVE!, I am writing to respectfully request your support of AB 2697 (Aguiar-Curry), as amended, which ensures California is able to address the state’s growing health needs and disparities for communities of color through Community Health Workers/Promotores.

Community health workers, or promotores (CHW/Ps), provide basic health and medical care within their communities. CHW/Ps are trusted messengers that come from the very communities they serve which makes them an effective tool to combat racial and ethnic disparities in our social safety nets. AB 2697 advances health equity by ensuring robust take-up of CHW/P Medi-Cal benefits and services, which have shown to improve health outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse Californians. This critical workforce is essential to informing communities of color, persons of limited English proficiency, and immigrants about services to prevent disease, disability, and other health conditions or their progression, prolong life, and promote physical and mental health.

Youth ALIVE! is a nationally recognized community-based organization known for initiating an international alliance to treat violence as a public health crisis and developing young leaders in the process. The Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Program (HVIP) that Youth ALIVE! pioneered has become an international model due to its success at preventing violent injuries. About 44% of patients with a violent injury are reinjured within 5 years, yet for victims who receive services through our HVIP, the reinjury rate is about 2%. Our decades of experience implementing this program, and other life-saving violence prevention and intervention programs, informs our decision to support AB 2697.

Starting in July 2022, DHCS plans to implement a new CHW/P benefit that will be available to all 16 million Medi-Cal beneficiaries. AB 2697 seeks to codify critical aspects of the State Plan Amendment for this Medi-Cal benefit, specifically concerning eligibility of CHW benefits, the scope of services that CHWs can provide, and minimum qualifications to become a CHW/P. These critical aspects of the SPA establish the long-term infrastructure that is needed if we are to continue to use CHW/Ps as a solution to addressing health inequities. The Governor has proposed to hire and recruit nearly 25,000 CHW/Ps across the state by 2024 and as



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CHW/Ps begin to receive recognition for their health intervention and prevention work; AB 2697 provides the Legislature with the opportunity to go beyond what has been established by the Administration and truly ensure equity remains at the forefront for this community-driven workforce. The Administration has gone as far as creating access but they have not implemented plans for how individuals and families who receive Medi-Cal will be notified of their new CHW/P benefit. AB 2697 requires Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans (MCPs) to develop education and outreach plans that will increase public awareness and inform existing beneficiaries of their options to work with CHW/Ps. For many families this will be the first time they are able to work with a CHW/P that is provided directly to them and ensuring awareness of this benefit will be critical if the state wants to ensure proper access and utilization.

Lastly, AB 2697 will require DHCS to assess the CHW/P benefit and measure outcomes. With any state program, there needs to be accountability and practices in place that can assess proper outcomes. These assessments are critical to account for how we can improve the program and the delivery of services in the future, and actually ensure that the historically excluded communities are receiving the benefits of these services.

CHW/Ps are successful in closing racial and ethnic health disparities. California is on its way to ensuring communities across the state have access to these essential community-driven models for prevention that reduce the need but also complement health care and treatment. It is imperative that the state prioritizes equity and access throughout the development of this benefit in order to truly achieve long-term success.

For all these reasons, we respectfully request your “aye” vote on AB 2697 (Aguiar-Curry).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anne Marks".

Anne Marks
Executive Director
Youth ALIVE!

CC: The Honorable Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, Author
Senate Health Committee, Members