



January 9, 2021

**Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services  
Testimony on behalf of Health & Medicine Policy Research Group  
Margie Schaps, MPH, Executive Director**

I appreciate the opportunity to present testimony to this body about HB 5448. My name is Margie Schaps and I am the Executive Director of the Health & Medicine Policy Research Group, a Chicago based, health research, policy and action group, founded by the late Dr. Quentin Young, focused for 40 years on challenging inequities in health and improving the health of all in Illinois.

I am here to voice our support for HB5448 and the important issues raised up by this piece of legislation. We should not, cannot, sit back as the health of the people of color in our state are disparately affected by systems and policies that undermine their health and well being. The Covid-19 pandemic has made these issues clear to anybody who still had any doubt. This legislation is a step toward redressing these systems and we applaud the authors for addressing so many issues that can improve the health of all, but particularly people of color in our state.

Health & Medicine works on health systems reform, Adverse Childhood Experiences, managed care, and many of the other issues addressed in this legislation, and I will be happy to meet with legislators and aids on any of these pieces. But for today, I want today to speak specifically about the section on Community Health Workers. Health & Medicine has been actively involved for over 20 years in efforts to expand and diversify the health and public health workforce to adequately meet the needs of our population. This of course has had us engaged in efforts to firmly establish Community Health Workers as vital members of the healthcare team. We were instrumental in developing HB 5412, the CHW Advisory Board Act, the report of which served as a template for much of what is in this legislation. We are working closely with the Sinai Urban Health Institute right now on an innovative community health worker model in the western suburbs of Chicago, and have written and presented widely on the value of CHWs to improve community health.

Community health workers play critical roles as trusted members of their communities in improving access to services, health education, addressing social isolation of seniors and others, and so much more. This legislation is essential and long overdue in recognizing, certifying and establishing a mechanism for reimbursement of this healthcare workforce.

As we review this legislation, we have identified small, yet important changes that we suggest related to core competencies, the CHW certification board, and the application for certification. I would be happy to meet with the authors of the bill (or staff) at any time to assist in refining and clarifying some of the language in the bill.

Respectfully, Margie Schaps