

Committees

Community Revitalization
Public Safety



Committees:

Children and Human Services
Small Business

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State Representative, Ohio House District 22

Good morning, Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Health Committee. Thank you for allowing me to speak on the amendment that removes from the bill the provision to abolish the Board of Directors of the Center for Community Health Worker Excellence and its statutory authority.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony today in strong support of maintaining the Board of Directors and the statutory authority of the Center for Community Health Worker Excellence. This is not just a program — it is a mission deeply rooted in the work of equity, access, and health transformation for every Ohioan.

As the first recognized Community Health Worker (CHW) to serve in the Ohio General Assembly, I bring lived experience and policy insight to this body. In the 135th General Assembly, this Center was championed in a bipartisan manner — because health should never be a partisan issue. The work we began was deliberate, strategic, and necessary, and dismantling this framework now would not only erase critical progress — it would send the wrong message to those serving our most vulnerable communities.

The Center for Community Health Worker Excellence was designed to formalize, strengthen, and elevate the CHW workforce across Ohio — individuals who act as the bridge between healthcare systems and underserved populations. These workers are on the frontlines:

- helping new and expectant mothers navigate prenatal and postnatal care;
- connecting reentering citizens from incarceration to housing, employment, and health services;
- providing critical access to care in rural and underserved areas; and
- advancing Ohio's workforce development strategy by training and certifying CHWs to meet growing community needs.

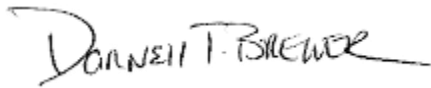
The Center's statutory authority ensures structure, credibility, and accountability. Eliminating it would diminish the momentum we've gained and undercut efforts that are already yielding a strong return on investment (ROI). Studies consistently show that CHWs help reduce emergency room visits, lower healthcare costs, improve chronic disease management, and enhance overall public health outcomes — all while embedding trust into the care process.

Furthermore, I want to call your attention to a point of national pride: Ohio — and specifically Columbus — was selected as the host city for the National Association of Community Health Workers (NACHW) Conference, titled Unity 2025, scheduled for July 30 to August 1, 2025. CHWs from across the nation and the world will convene here to discuss, learn, and uplift the very work we began through this Center. They are coming to Ohio because they recognize our leadership in this space. What message will we send if, at the very moment we welcome the world to Columbus, we've dismantled the very body that helped put us on the map?

To my colleagues in the Senate: this is about continuity, credibility, and compassion. We must invest in what works. We must listen to those closest to the issues. And we must protect the institutions that elevate community-driven health.

I urge this committee to reinstate and preserve both the Board of Directors and the statutory framework of the Center for Community Health Worker Excellence. Let us continue this mission — together — and lead Ohio forward in health equity, workforce development, and care innovation.

Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.



Representative Darnell T. Brewer
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