

## **HCR 3015 Community Health Worker Study Testimony**

Good Afternoon Chairwoman Lee and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee. For the record my name is Representative Gretchen Dobervich and I represent the people of District 11 in Fargo.

I come before you this morning with HCR 3015 which requests a study of how community health workers could expand access to health care in North Dakota, reduce healthcare costs and improve health outcomes for North Dakotans. In addition to my testimony, I have provided you each with a policy brief on Community Health Workers that was developed by Master of Public Health Students at North Dakota State University.

Community Health Workers are trained front line healthcare workers from the communities they serve, who work as community-based extensions of health care services. The scope of work of a Community Health Worker varies based on state regulations and parent organization policy. Examples of work Community Health Workers can do includes home visiting, first aid, health education, chronic infectious disease prevention and management, maternal and child health services, provision of water and food and behavioral health support, to name a few.

Currently 28 states recognize Community Health Workers including, but not limited to Texas, Minnesota, Utah, New Mexico, Alaska, Arizona and Florida. There is a National Association of Community Health Workers and several certification programs are in existence. Many blueprints for funding Community Health Workers have been developed and implemented.

An example of Community Health Workers in North Dakota would be the Community Health Representatives working in tribal nations. As a program of the Indian Health Services, their work is limited to the tribal communities. They not only provide health education, but also reduce transportation barriers in access to care, play a significant role in the home and community based prevention and management of chronic disease, provide some home based preventative screenings and have been key members of the health care teams testing for COVID-19, delivering food, supplies and medicine to homes, contact tracing and assisting with vaccination clinics in tribal communities.

Community Health Workers are a link between a medical provider's care and a patient's health maintenance. I encourage the committee to vote do pass on HCR 3015 so that we may explore the opportunity for improving health outcomes in North Dakota through the utilization of Community Health Workers.

Ms. Chairwoman and Members of the Committee, that concludes my testimony and I stand for questions.