



March 16, 2026

The Honorable Ben Watson
Chairman
Health & Human Services Committee
Georgia State Senate
325-A CLOB
Atlanta, GA 30334

The Honorable Kay Kirkpatrick
Vice Chairwoman
Health & Human Services Committee
Georgia State Senate
421-B State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

The Honorable Ed Setzler
Secretary
Health & Human Services Committee
Georgia State Senate
322-A CLOB
Atlanta, GA 30334

The Honorable Sonya Halpern
Member
Health & Human Services Committee
Georgia State Senate
303-B CLOB
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Chairman Watson, Vice Chairwoman Kirkpatrick, Secretary Setzler, and Senator Halpern:

On behalf of Health Students Taking Action Together (H-STAT), we write to strongly support HB 291, which establishes a certification framework for community health workers (CHWs) in Georgia. H-STAT represents the collective voices of hundreds of healthcare students and trainees across Georgia who are dedicated to improving health outcomes for all citizens. We urge the Health and Human Services Committee of the Georgia State Senate to support this bill.

Community health workers are frontline public health professionals who serve as trusted bridges between communities and the healthcare system. In Georgia, CHWs [provide](#) culturally appropriate health education, care coordination, informal counseling, health screenings, and advocacy, particularly for populations facing significant barriers to care. Georgia's urban and rural communities face disproportionately high burdens of [chronic disease](#) including asthma, heart disease, diabetes, and maternal and child health challenges. CHWs have demonstrated effectiveness in [reducing](#) unnecessary emergency department visits and hospitalizations, [decreasing](#) excess morbidity and mortality, and [addressing](#) the social determinants of health — such as transportation, housing instability, and limited health literacy — that fall outside the traditional scope of clinical care.

Despite this proven impact, Georgia currently lacks a standardized, statewide certification process for CHWs. HB 291 addresses this gap directly. The bill establishes the Georgia Community Health Worker Certification Committee, which would set training standards, define core competencies, create a formal application and credentialing process, and provide a pathway for experienced CHWs already working in the field to earn certification. By requiring 45 hours of core competency training and establishing tiered levels of practice, the bill ensures that all certified CHWs possess a consistent, evidence-based foundation of skills including communication, patient advocacy, care coordination, and community outreach.

Standardizing the CHW workforce through certification would also strengthen third-party [reimbursement pathways](#), making CHW services more financially sustainable for health systems, federally qualified health centers, and community-based organizations across the state. A well-credentialed CHW workforce is not only a public health investment, but it is a fiscally responsible strategy to reduce long-term costs to Georgia's Medicaid program and broader healthcare system.

In conclusion, we strongly support HB 291 as a critical step toward fully integrating community health workers into Georgia's healthcare infrastructure. By formalizing training, certification, and professional recognition for this growing workforce, this bill advances health equity, reduces disparities, and improves health outcomes for Georgia's most vulnerable communities. Thank you for your consideration of this issue. We look forward to working with you to promote the health of all people in Georgia. If you have any questions, please contact Nicholas Wilson, H-STAT President, at nicholas@healthstatgeorgia.org.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Wilson
H-STAT President
Health Students Taking Action Together