A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that during the coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19) pandemic, many rural areas in the State of Hawaii were disconnected and unable to receive adequate healthcare services. As rural communities struggled with connectivity, transportation, and financial obligations, community health workers provided a critical lifeline to ensuring its residents healthcare needs are met. With the rapidly changing global health pandemic, rural communities that have limited healthcare services are at a greater risk of receiving access to adequate, timely and life-saving healthcare services.

Many families living in rural areas comprise diverse communities, including low-income, underserved rural areas, all ethnicities, children, adults, families, elderly individuals, uninsured individuals, homeless individuals, immigrants and migrant workers. Many of these families face language and
cultural barriers that require further assistance and technology in the community.

The legislature further finds that with deepening food insecurity, increasing housing instability, slow job recovery, and the replacement of many in-person health services with telehealth services, the need for community health workers to bridge communities and systems of care is greater than ever. Increasing the number of community healthcare workers and standardizing their certification and training will help address these issues.

The purpose of this Act is to establish a task force to plan the certification and training process for community health workers.

SECTION 2. (a) The department of health shall establish a community health worker certification task force to plan the certification and training process for community health workers to help address the social determinants of poor health that disproportionately affect low-income, minority populations, which are magnified during times of crisis.

(b) The director of health or the director's designee shall serve as the chairperson of the task force. The director
of health shall invite the following individuals to serve as the
members of the task force:

(1) One community health worker from each county;

(2) A representative from the University of Hawaii system;

(3) A representative from the University of Hawaii office
    of public health studies;

(4) A representative from the Hawaii public health
    institute;

(5) A representative from the Hawaii public housing
    authority;

(6) A representative from the department of human services
    med-QUEST division;

(7) A representative from the Hawaii health systems
    corporation;

(8) A representative from the University of Hawaii west
    Oahu; and

(9) A representative from the University of Hawaii school
    of nursing and dental hygiene.

(c) The task force shall submit a report detailing the
status of the plan for the certification and training process
for community health workers required by this Act, including any
proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty
days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2022.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.
Report Title:
Community Health Workers; Certification; Training; Department of Health; Task Force

Description:
Requires the Department of Health to establish a task force to plan the certification and training process for community health workers and submit a report to the legislature. (SD1)

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