



## Evidence for Increasing Community Health Worker Wages

April 2018

The Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers (MACHW) commissioned the University of Massachusetts' Center for Social Policy to prepare a report on the skills and wages of community health workers (CHWs).<sup>1</sup> Community health workers are a unique and increasingly significant part of the healthcare and public health workforce. There is national consensus on core CHW roles and skills,<sup>2</sup> and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) recognizes CHWs as an important health occupation for improving health outcomes and reducing costs.

The commissioned report found, however, that CHWs in Massachusetts receive considerably lower pay than those in occupations that require some similar skills. In response, **MACHW is recommending that employers consider adopting the following minimum salary range for CHWs:**

Experience	Salary
Entry 0 – 2 years	\$38,000- \$42,000
Mid-Career 2- 5 years	\$42,000- \$46,000
Senior 5+ years	\$46,000+

**To date, most CHWs are not paid living wages.** In 2016, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, CHWs in Massachusetts earned an average hourly wage of \$20.86. Research shows that that the CHW workforce is predominantly women of color who likely support children. Using the MIT Living Wage Calculator for Massachusetts, the living hourly wage for a single adult with 2 children is \$32.98 or approximately \$68,600 in annual earnings for a full time, year-round worker. We acknowledge living wages differ across the state. For example, a living wage for a single adult with two children living in Boston is \$34.51 an hour compared to \$29.40 for those living in Franklin County. We also recognize the importance of acknowledging years of experiences to improve retention rates.

The demand for CHWs is growing and without a corresponding increase in wage growth, it will become more difficult to recruit, hire and retain CHWs.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Massachusetts' Center for Social Policy.

<sup>2</sup> Rosenthal EL, Rush CH, Allen CG; Project on CHW Policy & Practice. Understanding scope and competencies: a contemporary look at the United States community health worker field: progress report of the community health worker (CHW) core consensus (C3) project: building national consensus on CHW core roles, skills, and qualities [Internet]. 2016. Available from <http://files.ctctcdn.com/a907c850501/1c1289f0-88cc-49c3-a238-66def942c147.pdf>