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IT'S OFFICIAL—GOVERNOR SIGNS BILL TO ESTABLISH 'COMMUNITY PARAMEDICS'

New health care provider type will increase access to care across Colorado

DENVER – June 8, 2016 – Today at the State Capitol, Governor John Hickenlooper signed into law Senate Bill 16-069. The bill provides recognition and oversight to community paramedics, a relatively new health care provider type that dispatches paramedics proactively into communities to provide care, instead of waiting for an emergency. With the new regulations in place, community paramedics and related programs will be able to serve underserved populations across Colorado, increasing access to care and reducing preventable emergency room visits.

Statewide collaborative work on this issue began in 2014 when the Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved (CCMU) united pilot programs around the state for planning meetings after several years of research by local leaders. The group requested that the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) form a taskforce, and in 2015, the taskforce developed recommendations for regulation and oversight of community paramedics and their related programs.

"I am pleased the Governor signed SB 16-069," said Senator Leroy Garcia (D-Pueblo), prime sponsor of this legislation. "Coloradans deserve access to quality health care, but over a dozen counties in Colorado don't have a hospital. This program will ensure underserved communities can receive care from a properly trained professional in their homes—saving them an unnecessary trip to the hospital."

The bill underwent a series of amendments and compromises, but ultimately achieved the goals set forth by the taskforce and received bipartisan support. Aubrey Hill, Director of Health Systems Change at CCMU, and appointee of the CDPHE taskforce, testified in favor of the bill.

"This legislation proved a challenge in seeking agreement from multiple stakeholders with varying perspectives," said Hill. "However, the version of SB 16-069 that became law today elevates the vision that many stakeholders had for this new provider type."

Community paramedics meet with patients in their homes or other locations to provide basic primary care, medication compliance, and care coordination. They have been shown to reduce hospital readmissions, over-utilization of 911 and emergency responder services, inappropriate use of the emergency room, challenges related to transportation and compliance, and barriers to accessing care. The bill signed by Governor Hickenlooper today provides both the regulatory framework for these providers to practice and the flexibility for EMS and Fire agencies to adapt local programs depending on the community's needs.

In addition to CCMU, the Emergency Medical Services Association of Colorado, Colorado Nurses Association, Colorado Hospital Association, Eagle County Paramedic Services, Ute Pass Regional Ambulance District, Colorado State Fire Chiefs, Home Care Association of Colorado, and Colorado Rural Health Center supported this legislation and participated in advocating for its passage.

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About the Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved



Our mission is to create opportunities and eliminate barriers to good health for medically underserved Coloradans. We work collaboratively to increase understanding of the issues, support local health change initiatives, and advance good public policy to improve the health care system.