

CHAPTER 436

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

HOUSE BILL 23-1244

BY REPRESENTATIVE(S) deGruy Kennedy and Velasco, Amabile, Bacon, Bird, Boesenecker, Brown, English, Epps, Froelich, Garcia, Gonzales-Gutierrez, Hamrick, Herod, Jodeh, Joseph, Lieder, Lindsay, Lindstedt, Lukens, Mabrey, Marshall, Michaelson Jenet, Sirota, Snyder, Story, Titone, Weissman, Willford, Young, McCluskie, Duran, Kipp, McLachlan, Ortiz, Ricks, Sharbini, Woodrow;
also SENATOR(S) Priola, Cutter, Jaquez Lewis, Marchman, Roberts, Rodriguez.

AN ACT

CONCERNING THE TRANSFER OF THE REGIONAL HEALTH CONNECTOR PROGRAM FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO SCHOOL OF MEDICINE TO THE PREVENTION SERVICES DIVISION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

SECTION 1. Legislative declaration. (1) The general assembly finds and declares that:

(a) Since 2015, Colorado's regional health connector program has operated as a partnership between statewide nonprofits and local host organizations to improve the population's health;

(b) From 2015 to 2019, Colorado's state innovation model used federal grant funding to support 344 primary care practices and 4 community mental health centers to integrate behavioral and physical health care, build a network of regional health connectors that links practices with community resources, and advance the development of value-based payment structures;

(c) After the expiration of the federal grant, the regional health connector program was kept afloat through funding from a combination of state and local organizations; and

(d) In fiscal year 2022-23, the general assembly appropriated money directly to

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the university of Colorado school of medicine to pass through to the regional health connectors to fill the funding gaps.

(2) Therefore, the general assembly declares that it is necessary to sustain and expand the important work of the regional health connectors by providing more state funding and formal oversight from the state government.

SECTION 2. In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** part 20 to article 20.5 of title 25 as follows:

PART 20
REGIONAL HEALTH CONNECTOR PROGRAM

25-20.5-2001. Regional health connector program - creation - third-party contract - department duties - rules - definitions. (1) AS USED IN THIS PART 20, UNLESS THE CONTEXT OTHERWISE REQUIRES:

(a) "LOCALLY BASED HOST ORGANIZATION" MEANS A REGIONAL ORGANIZATION CHOSEN TO HIRE AND SUPPORT THE REGIONAL HEALTH CONNECTOR IN THE ORGANIZATION'S REGION.

(b) "PROGRAM" MEANS THE REGIONAL HEALTH CONNECTOR PROGRAM CREATED IN SUBSECTION (2) OF THIS SECTION.

(c) "REGIONAL HEALTH CONNECTOR" MEANS A DESIGNATED PERSON HIRED AND SUPPORTED BY A LOCALLY BASED HOST ORGANIZATION TO ENGAGE IN THE ACTIVITIES DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION (4) OF THIS SECTION.

(2) THERE IS CREATED IN THE DIVISION THE REGIONAL HEALTH CONNECTOR PROGRAM FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONVENING AND ENGAGING LOCAL PRIMARY CARE PRACTICES, OTHER HEALTH-CARE PROVIDERS AND PARTNERS, PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES, AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES TO IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS SPECIFIC HEALTH-RELATED ISSUES AND HEALTH-RELATED SOCIAL NEEDS IN COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE. THE DIVISION SHALL ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM AND THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CONTRACT WITH A THIRD-PARTY ENTITY TO COORDINATE AND OVERSEE THE PROGRAM. THE DIVISION SHALL PROMOTE ALIGNMENT BETWEEN DIVISION PRIORITIES, PROGRAMS AND PARTNERS, THE CONTRACTED ENTITY, AND LOCALLY BASED HOST ORGANIZATIONS.

(3) CONTRACT APPLICANTS SHALL DEMONSTRATE HOW THE APPLICANT WILL:

(a) ENGAGE AND COORDINATE WITH LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES, THE DEPARTMENT, AND OTHER AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CARE POLICY AND FINANCING, THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, THE DIVISION OF INSURANCE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF REGULATORY AGENCIES, THE COLORADO HEALTH EXTENSION SYSTEM, THE PRIMARY CARE PAYMENT REFORM COLLABORATIVE, HEALTH-RELATED NONPROFITS, AND HEALTH PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS;

(b) ESTABLISH AND ALIGN STATEWIDE AND REGIONAL HEALTH GOALS AND PRIORITIES;

(c) HOLD REGIONAL HEALTH CONNECTORS ACCOUNTABLE FOR MEETING OBJECTIVES; AND

(d) COLLECT AND REPORT DATA TO THE DIVISION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF REGIONAL HEALTH CONNECTORS.

(4) THE CONTRACTED ENTITY SHALL DISTRIBUTE MONEY APPROPRIATED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (7) OF THIS SECTION TO EACH LOCALLY BASED HOST ORGANIZATION FOR THE REGIONAL HEALTH CONNECTOR TO:

(a) IDENTIFY AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND SUPPORT EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS BY STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PRIMARY CARE AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, COORDINATING ACTIVITIES TO REDUCE FRAGMENTATION IN THE HEALTH SYSTEM, AND INTEGRATING CLINICAL AND COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS LOCAL PRIORITIES, HEALTH EQUITY, AND SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH;

(b) WORK WITH PRACTICE TRANSFORMATION ORGANIZATIONS, PRACTICE FACILITATORS, AND CLINICAL HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ADVISORS IN ASSISTING PRIMARY CARE PRACTICES AND OTHER CARE ORGANIZATIONS TO IMPROVE CARE;

(c) CREATE AND SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AMONG PRACTICES AND LOCAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS;

(d) COLLABORATE WITH REGIONAL ACCOUNTABLE ENTITIES, COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTERS, LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES, FOUNDATION PARTNERS, AND STATEWIDE ORGANIZATIONS;

(e) IDENTIFY AND ASSIST SYSTEM NAVIGATORS, INCLUDING CARE COORDINATORS, CARE MANAGERS, HEALTH NAVIGATORS, AND COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS; AND

(f) ALIGN WITH STATE HEALTH PRIORITIES, PROGRAMS, AND PARTNERS.

(5) THE CONTRACTED ENTITY MAY RETAIN A PERCENTAGE OF THE MONEY APPROPRIATED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (7) OF THIS SECTION FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM, AND THE CONTRACTED ENTITY MAY SUBCONTRACT WITH OTHER STATEWIDE ORGANIZATIONS AND COLLABORATE WITH THE DIVISION TO HELP WITH SETTING PRIORITIES AND EVALUATING PROGRAMS.

(6) THE DEPARTMENT MAY PROMULGATE RULES AS NECESSARY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PART 20.

(7) (a) FOR THE 2023-24 STATE FISCAL YEAR, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHALL APPROPRIATE ONE MILLION FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS FROM THE GENERAL FUND TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR USE BY THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO FOR ALLOCATION TO THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE FOR THE PURPOSES OF SECTION 23-21-901.

(b) FOR THE 2024-25 STATE FISCAL YEAR, AND EACH STATE FISCAL YEAR THEREAFTER, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHALL ANNUALLY APPROPRIATE ONE

MILLION FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS FROM THE GENERAL FUND TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR USE BY THE DIVISION FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION.

SECTION 3. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 23-21-901, **add** (2) as follows:

23-21-901. Regional health connector workforce program - creation - school of medicine - repeal. (2) THIS SECTION IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2025.

SECTION 4. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 23-3.3-103, **add** (21) as follows:

23-3.3-103. Annual appropriations - repeal. (21) (a) THE PROVISIONS OF SUBSECTION (1) OF THIS SECTION CONCERNING APPROPRIATIONS FOR STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PURSUANT TO THIS ARTICLE 3.3 DO NOT APPLY TO APPROPRIATIONS MADE PURSUANT TO SECTION 25-20.5-2001 FOR THE REGIONAL HEALTH CONNECTOR PROGRAM.

(b) THIS SUBSECTION (21) IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2024.

SECTION 5. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 25.5-5-333, **amend** (6) introductory portion and (6)(m) as follows:

25.5-5-333. Primary care and behavioral health statewide integration grant program - creation - report - definition - repeal. (6) In selecting grant recipients, the state department shall first prioritize applicants that serve priority populations that experience disparities in health-care access and outcomes, including but not limited to historically marginalized and underserved communities, determined by the communities with the highest proportion of patients receiving assistance through the "Colorado Medical Assistance Act", ~~articles 4, 5, and 6~~ THIS ARTICLE 5 AND ARTICLES 4 AND 6 of THIS title 25.5. The state department shall then prioritize applicants that meet as many of the following criteria as possible:

(m) Participate in the regional health connector ~~workforce~~ program created in ~~section 23-21-901~~ SECTION 25-20.5-2001.

SECTION 6. Appropriation. (1) For the 2023-24 state fiscal year, \$1,500,000 is appropriated to the department of higher education for use by the regents of the university of Colorado. This appropriation is from the general fund and is based on an assumption that the regents will require an additional 0.8 FTE. To implement this act, the regents may use this appropriation for allocation to the school of medicine for the regional health connector program.

(2) For the 2023-24 state fiscal year, \$71,903 is appropriated to the department of public health and environment for use by the prevention services division. This appropriation is from the general fund and is based on an assumption that the division will require an additional 0.9 FTE. To implement this act, the division may use this appropriation for chronic disease and cancer prevention grants related to chronic disease prevention programs.

SECTION 7. Act subject to petition - effective date. This act takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except that, if a referendum petition is filed

pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in November 2024 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.

Approved: June 7, 2023