How to Strengthen the Profession’s Impact in Public Policy

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Pronouns: she/ her/ hers

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President, NASW
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April 4, 2022
Agenda

- Welcome
- NASW’s Federal Policy Portfolio
- State of Play in Washington, D.C.
- Translating Research to Policy
- Progress Made
- Recommendations
- Reflections from President Mildred “Mit” Joyner on Social Justice
- Q and A
Events Leading to This Presentation


- Leadership Roundtable meeting in December 2021.
NASW’s Blueprint of Federal Social Policy Priorities

- Actionable recommendations to the Administration and Congress
- 21 issue areas, organized using the Grand Challenges for Social Work
  - Workforce
  - Social Justice
- Endorsed by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare
- Social policy: many opportunities, under any administration and regardless of which party controls Congress
NASW Advocacy

- **Regulatory:**
  - Federal and state agencies (e.g. US Department of Health and Human Services, including Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Department of Education, etc.)
  - State licensing boards

- **Legislative: bills, briefings, and testimony**
  - 5 social workers in Congress – few other professions this well-represented – but we need more!

- **Executive branch: White House**

- **Judicial: Courts**
Working in Coalition

- Provide distinctive social work perspective in 60+ national coalitions which include non-profits focused on specific issue areas. These include, among many others:
  - **Mental Health Liaison Group**
    - Sarah Butts, MHLG board member (2020 - present)
    - AASWSW due to join as affiliate member organization
  - **Coalition on Human Needs**
  - **Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights**
NASW’s Policy Portfolio

**Workforce Advocacy Priorities**
- Compensation/reimbursement
- License portability
- Safety on the job
- Student loan debt relief
- Education and training opportunities
- Scope of practice
- Title protection

**Social Justice Priorities**
- Healthcare Equity
- Economic Justice
- Criminal/Juvenile Justice
- Political Justice
- Voting Rights
- Immigration Justice
- Climate Justice
- Ending Racism

*Racial equity is the “through line”*
President Biden’s Budget: Unprecedented Investments in Mental Health, Behavioral Health and Parity

President Biden’s Fiscal Year 2023 Budget was released on March 28th; includes significant Mental Health Care Reforms

- The **budget proposal calls for full mental health parity** and would:
  - remove limits on the scope of services for which Clinical Social Workers can be paid by Medicare
  - modernize Medicare’s mental health benefits and improve behavioral health for the private insurance market and Medicaid beneficiaries

- The president’s budget request also includes $50 million for burnout prevention in the health care workforce. HHS says this investment would provide support for the remaining health care workforce and could improve both retention and recruitment for the future.
The budget includes measures to increase access to mental and behavioral health services in underserved areas as well as investments to grow and diversify the workforce to deliver high-quality, culturally appropriate mental health and substance use services.

- **$397 million for Behavioral Health Workforce Programs**
- **$10 million for a Rural Health Clinic Behavioral Health Initiative** to allow clinics in rural areas where there are no existing behavioral health providers to fund the salary of a behavioral health provider – including social workers
- Expanded funding for community health centers, including investing new resources in embedding early childhood development experts.
- **$50 million for Preventing Burnout in the Health Workforce.**
- **$7.5 billion demonstration to improve provider capacity in Medicaid to address mental health treatment.**
President Biden’s Budget

- $7.5 billion for a new Mental Health System Transformation Fund with goals of:
  - Increasing access to mental health services through workforce development and service expansion
  - Development of non-traditional health delivery sites
  - Integration of quality mental health and substance use care into primary care settings
  - Dissemination of evidence-based practices
Additional Key Developments

- Both chambers of Congress are developing mental health packages
Congressional Legislation

- How is legislation developed?
- How is input requested from NASW and other groups?
- How are stakeholders acknowledged when they help?
- Examples and tips...
Congressional Bills That NASW Has Helped to Develop

- **Improving Access to Mental Health Act** *(H.R. 2035/ S. 870)*
- **Collaborate in an Orderly and Cohesive Manner Act** *(H.R. 5218)*
- **School Social Workers Improving Student Success Act** *(H.R. 7037)*
- **The Community-Based Response Act** *(H.R. 3862/S. 2046)*
- **Protecting Social Workers and Health Professionals from Workplace Violence Act**
- **Resilience for All Act** *(draft, not introduced)*
- **Others have not yet been introduced, some may not get introduced*
JUNE 14, 2021

VAN HOLLEN, BASS REINTRODUCE COMMUNITY-BASED CRISIS RESPONSE LEGISLATION

Bill Aims to Create Alternatives to a Law Enforcement Response in Appropriate Situations

Today, U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) and U.S. Representative Karen Bass (D-Calif.) reintroduced their legislation to improve our emergency response capabilities by creating systemic alternatives to police involvement in appropriate situations. Their legislation, The Community-Based Response Act, creates a new Community-Based Emergency and Non-Emergency Response Grant Program through the Department of Health and Human Services to establish programs to encourage local governments to develop additional options, beyond law enforcement, for certain kinds of community-based emergency response. The bill will help provide for the dispatch of professionals trained in mental and behavioral health, crisis response, or mediation instead of law enforcement. Too often, dispatching law enforcement to emergencies where a use-of-force response is not warranted has resulted in unnecessary escalation and tragic death.
“Many social workers and other essential healthcare workers on the frontlines of the pandemic are saddled with student loan debt. Social workers are providing critical mental and behavioral health services and social needs care to underserved communities and they are required to have a high level of education to practice and are among the lowest-paid professionals in the workforce,” said Sarah Christa Butts, MSW, director of Public Policy, National Association of Social Workers.
Social workers press Democrats to make Child Tax Credit permanent

By CAITLIN OPRYSKO | 10/25/2021 06:41 PM EDT

With Daniel Lippman

SOCIAL WORKERS PRESS LAWMAKERS TO PERMANENTLY EXTEND CTC: Hundreds of social workers, social work researchers and practitioners called on Congress today to permanently extend and make refundable the enhanced Child Tax Credit enacted in President Joe Biden’s coronavirus relief package this spring, comparing the policy to the Great Depression-inspired Social Security program, which they called the country’s “most important anti-poverty program.”

— “In our daily work we see the impacts of economic instability and insufficient income on the lived experiences of children and their families,” the social work experts wrote in a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, House Whip James Clyburn and Senate Whip Dick Durbin.

FIRST IN PULSE: ADDICTION TREATMENT GROUPS BACK PAID LEAVE PLAN — A coalition of addiction treatment organizations is calling on Democrats to preserve national paid leave as part of their social spending bill, arguing it would make it easier for people to seek treatment.

“Many working people, especially with low income, cannot access substance use disorder treatment simply because it requires time off from work,” said Sarah Christa Butts, director of public policy for the National Association of Social Workers.

The group, which includes several West Virginia treatment organizations, also noted in its letter that efforts to combat the opioid epidemic have long been a top priority for Sen. Joe Manchin. Manchin has demanded that the bill’s size and scope be reduced to win his vote, though he’s yet to weigh in definitively on the prospect of including paid leave.

NAME IN THE NEWS

Brad Smith, a former Trump-era director of CMS’ Innovation Center, is joining...
School Social Workers Improving Student Success Act (H.R. 7037)

Comments, Statements and Sign-on Letters

Sign-On Letters

NASW signs on to letters with coalition partners to demonstrate unity on an issue and to push for change.

2022 Sign-On Letters

- NASW signs onto letter to President Biden thanking him for his support of Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services and pushing for the $150 billion investment in the program (3/22/2022)
- NASW signs onto coalition letter to Congressional leaders urging swift passage of the Child Poverty Reduction Act (H.R. 1558/S. 643) (3/14/2022)
- NASW signs onto PARCA letter to Administration officials in favor of a strong and enforceable provider

Comments &
Statements
NASW signs on to letters to Congress and the Administration to promote our public policy goals. We also write statements and letters to the Administration on a wide range of policy issues.

Link: https://www.socialworkers.org/Advocacy/Sign-On-Letters-Statements
Partnerships Are Critical

- NASW is part of a learning collaborative with the Legal Action Center (LAC) and partners on a [Medicare Addiction Parity Project](#) and helped to develop the [Roadmap for Reform](#).
- LAC is now developing legislation that will be introduced in both chambers of congress and will include a number of NASW’s recommendations, re: workforce, reimbursement and parity in Medicare.
Our Policy Efforts: Facilitating Understanding of the Value of Social Work

What Congress Can Learn from Social Workers About Workplace Safety

Congressional offices prepare to open to the public for the first time since the pandemic and the January 6th attack still very much top of mind for many staffers, we turned to the National Association of Social Workers to learn from the experience of social workers.

Click here for a printable checklist for Congressional offices from NASW's safety guidance.
Our Policy Efforts: Workforce Data

Secures first ever Federal Government Study on the Social Work Workforce

Jul 30, 2021

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), together with Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA), a social worker and chair of the Congressional Social Work Caucus, have secured a comprehensive government study to be conducted on the social work workforce.

The study was ordered through the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, which was approved by the House Appropriations Committee on July 15. The report is to explore recruitment, retention, research, and reinvestment, and provide recommendations and strategies to ensure a sufficient and strong social work workforce.

Millions of Americans are not receiving the mental, behavioral health and social care services they need, and...
Our Policy Efforts: Interstate Compact

- COVID-19 has underscored the need for increased access to health, mental health and social care services
- Telehealth expansion during COVID-19 is here to stay; site and geographic restrictions have been removed in Medicare, creating increased interest in interstate practice capability
- States must enact enabling legislation; social workers key in advocacy!
- Target date for initial states: 2024
Our Policy Efforts: Student Loan Debt Relief

- NASW’s advocacy on student debt includes: forgiveness (Public Service Loan Forgiveness, PSLF waiver, IDR waiver), cancellation, employer sponsored student debt relief and other measures.
- **NASW submits comments to the Department of Education in response to Request for Information on the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program** *(Sept. 24, 2021)*
- **NASW and the Student Borrower Protection Center submit memo to the Department of Education (DoEd) on behalf of Social Workers in response to DoEd’s Request for Information on the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program** *(Sept. 17, 2021)*
- **NASW applauds Biden Administration for overhaul of troubled Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program** *(October 7, 2021)*
- **NASW National along with 50 NASW Chapters sign onto the Student Borrower Protection Center coalition letter urging President Biden to Delay Restarting Student Loan Payments** *(12/8/2021)*
- **NASW signs onto letter to Secretary Cardona urging the Department of Education to create an Income-Driven Repayment waiver for student loan debt** *(2/9/2022)*
- **NASW, Student Borrower Protection Center and 11 other organizations submit comments to the Department of Education on Public Service Loan Forgiveness Reconsideration Request** *(3/29/2022)*
Our Policy Efforts: Influence Provisions of Forthcoming Congressional Bills

- NASW submits comments in response to Senators Murray and Burr Request for Comment on the *Prepare for and Respond to Existing Viruses, Emerging New Threats, and Pandemics Act* (PREVENT Pandemics Act) *(Feb. 4, 2022)*
- NASW Provides Recommendations to Senators Wyden and Crapo's Request for Policy Proposals to Address Unmet Mental Health Needs *(Nov. 15, 2021)*
- NASW’s provides recommendations to Senators Murphy and Cassidy in response to a Request for Stakeholder Input Regarding Federal Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Programs *(Nov. 5, 2021)*
- NASW provides Recommendations to Senators Bennet and Cornyn for Achieving the Aims of “A Bold Vision for America’s Mental Well-being” *(Oct. 8, 2021)*
Importance of Macro Policy Practice Throughout the Career Continuum

- Encouraging and supporting Macro policy field placements
  - State Legislatures, Congress, Government Departments and Agencies
- Policy fellowships
  - Students, Practitioners, Faculty
- Washington, D.C. social work student visits
Macro Policy Fellowship Examples

Paige Jones

Health Fellow

Paige Jones, LMSW is a professional MACRO social worker, who resides in Washington, D.C. Paige was born in Washington, D.C., and raised in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. Paige earned her Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Howard University and most recently, her Master’s in Social Work from UMD-Baltimore. As a social worker in public policy, Paige looks forward to expanding the scope of what social workers can do and elevate the way we are perceived. By utilizing her clinical social work background, Paige hopes to push forward policy that has a holistic view of serving underserved Americans. Having recently completed a year-long public policy internship with the National Association of Social Workers, Paige worked on federal policy, advocacy, and research with a focus on racial inequality regarding somatic health, behavioral health, and the social determinants of health. Paige is deeply motivated and passionate about social equity, justice, and health-related policy. Jones
Macro Policy Fellowship Examples

LACINDA JONES, LISW-S
Senior Social Worker, Department of Veterans Affairs, VA Puget Sound Health Care System
2021 Fellow

LaCinda Jones is a Senior Social Worker at the Department of Veterans Affairs. She works directly with Veterans affected by Traumatic Brain Injuries. She is the facility coordinator for Advance Care Planning via Group visits. Her role was as a social worker in the acute care hospital on the medical units. LaCinda serves as a Co-Lead for the National Social Work Eidenti®v®et families and learns about macro policy on the national level.

HillVets and WWP Announce Fellowship Selection

WASHINGTON, DC (Dec. 8, 2021) - Today the HillVets Foundation and Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) announced U.S. Navy veteran Kirsten Laha-Walsh as the recipient of the inaugural HillVets-WWP Fellowship.

“Kirsten Laha-Walsh is the perfect choice to be the first HillVets-Wounded Warrior Project fellow. As a Navy veteran and caregiver for her retired Marine corps spouse and Purple Heart recipient, she has a passion for empowering and supporting wounded veterans,” said HillVets Foundation Executive Director Matty Thomas. “Kirsten just completed the HillVets LEAD program as part of Cohort 6, and we are so proud that she has chosen to continue her public policy and advocacy training. We’re humbled that she has put her trust in HillVets and Wounded Warrior Project, and we know she will make a big impact on the military-connected community.”

Announced earlier this year, the HillVets-WWP Fellowship is unique in that the fellow will serve six months as a legislative fellow for the U.S. House For Country Caucus, a bipartisan group of members of Congress who are all U.S. military veterans. The fellowship will be followed by a six-month rotation working at WWP with the Government & Community Relations team. The fellowship is open to post-9/11 veterans interested in pursuing a career in advocacy and public policy.
Macro Policy Fellowship Examples

- **2019-2020**
  - Liliane Windsor, Ph.D., M.S.W., associate professor, School of Social Work, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana/ Senator Durbin (D-IL)

- **2020-2021**
  - Angela Perone, J.D., M.S.W., M.A., founding executive director, SAGE Metro Detroit, Ferndale, Michigan /Senator Baldwin (D-WI)
Social Work Expert Scholars and Practitioners Providing Input to White House

Sarah Gehlert, PhD, MSW
Appointed to White House Health Equity Advisory Panel

Lee Westgate, MSW, MBA, LCSW-C
Representative on the White House Healthcare Provider Stakeholder Coalition
Social Work PAC

- NASW PACE (PAC)
  - We support members of Congress who share social work values and support our policy goals
- NASW voter mobilization efforts
- Field organizers
- 43 State PACs
Recommendations

▪ Accelerate the translation of research to policy and practice
▪ Strive for collective impact in policy across the profession
▪ Focus on opportunities to encourage, facilitate and celebrate Macro policy practice through policy internships and fellowships
▪ Prioritize media coverage of Social Work and our research via op-eds, newspaper articles, etc. related to public policy
▪ Promote student visits by schools of social work to Washington, D.C.
▪ Hill Days for social work faculty and practitioners
  ▪ SSWR and CSWE should host hill days when conferences are in Washington, D.C.
▪ Explore how collective impact in policy may be achieved through joint membership opportunities among social work organizations
Recommendations

- Facilitate understanding of the value of professional associations in federal and state advocacy and encourage students to join as student members of NASW
- Nominate social workers (scholars and practitioners) for government leadership roles
- Nominate social work Macro practitioners for awards. They need multi-disciplinary recognition to rise in their practice area
- Encourage Social workers to serve on the boards of influential D.C. based policy organizations and coalitions and be recognized by the profession for doing so
- Work to get the MSW listed in Congressional and state legislature staff job postings
Reflections From NASW President Mildred “Mit” Joyner
Calling on Social Workers To Lead In Social Justice
White House Executive Briefing- Social Work is Essential – July 2021
Social Work In Action
We are Stronger Together
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Resources

• NASW’s Blueprint of Federal Social Policy Priorities
• NASW Legislative Alerts https://www.socialworkers.org/Advocacy/Legislative-Alerts
• CSWE’s Policy Agenda https://www.cswe.org/Advocacy-Policy/Policy-Agenda#Education
• Description of CSWE’s Public Policy Initiative: https://www.cswe.org/advocacy-policy/policy-agenda/about-ppi/
Join Us!

Our advocacy efforts and our progress are not possible without you. Your voice holds power as a constituent, as a voter, and as a social worker.