Every day, over 650,000 social workers assist over 10 million individuals in the United States. The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic needs of all people, with particular attention to persons who are ill or are experiencing mental, physical, or intellectual challenges, and to populations that are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. For more than a century, social work has achieved a reputation as the helping profession and has made significant contributions to the strength and vitality of our nation’s people and communities.

Social workers find solutions and assist those dealing with illness, poverty, addiction, emotional distress, and other psychological, economic, and social issues. They work in child welfare agencies, veterans and military settings, services for older adults, health clinics and impatient health care settings, hospitals, mental health clinics, schools, government agencies, legislatures, social services agencies, private practices, and many more settings in the public and private sectors. In short, social workers provide vital services in preserving the fabric that supports the well-being of our nation and the people who live in it. This fabric of service and care has become essential as the needs of America’s middle class, older populations, and the most vulnerable among us are growing.

Congress and the Obama administration play indispensable roles in helping to provide opportunities for persons from all walks of life to fulfill their potential and to lead healthy, productive lives. Meeting the challenges upon us can only be achieved through a bipartisan approach that seeks sustainable and meaningful solutions to benefit Americans in need. To assist in this effort, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) proposes several public policy recommendations for consideration by the executive branch and the 114th Congress.

NASW POLICY PRIORITIES
» Support Medicare reimbursement rate parity for clinical social workers (CSWs)
» Modify Health and Behavior Assessment and Intervention (HBAI) Codes and expand the social security definition of CSWs
» Support student loan forgiveness for social workers in high-need areas; for child welfare workers, during deliberations on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), and by providing funding to support implementation of the programs as authorized in the HEA
» Reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 2015 in celebration of its 50th anniversary
» Preserve funding for OAA and other discretionary programs by averting cuts through sequestration or any other funding mechanism
» Support re-introduction and passage of the Social Work Reinvestment Act
» Ensure that mental health services are available to populations in need across the nation and that resources are allocated to ensuring an adequate professional workforce of social workers

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