



December 3, 2015

In an attempt to keep chapters in the loop about our Public Policy efforts in Washington, DC, we will commence a monthly update to chapters about our activities, called the Washington Update.

#### **Meetings with the White House**

NASW worked with the White House to get the NASW West Virginia Chapter President & Executive Director invited to attend an event on October 21 with President Obama in Charleston, WV, on addressing opioid drug abuse and misuse. The President highlighted NASW in the fact sheet that was released at the event. Sam Hickman, West Virginia Chapter Executive Director was instrumental in bringing the event to our attention and in crafting a response to the request from White House staff.

#### **Meetings with Legislative Offices**

Sens. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA-13) introduced the Improving Access to Mental Health Act of 2015 (S. 2173/H.R. 3712) on October 8, 2015. NASW had met with their offices to discuss the legislation that will address the Medicare reimbursement rate for social workers, expanding HBAI Codes and allowing social workers to be reimbursed for services provided in skilled nursing facilities (SNFs).

In the House, the following members have signed onto the legislation:

<a href="#">Rep. Brown, Corrine [D-FL-5]*</a>	10/08/2015
<a href="#">Rep. Honda, Michael M. [D-CA-17]*</a>	10/08/2015
<a href="#">Rep. Clarke, Yvette D. [D-NY-9]*</a>	10/08/2015
<a href="#">Rep. Bordallo, Madeleine Z. [D-GU-At Large]*</a>	10/08/2015
<a href="#">Rep. Watson Coleman, Bonnie [D-NJ-12]*</a>	10/08/2015
<a href="#">Rep. Grijalva, Raul M. [D-AZ-3]*</a>	10/08/2015
<a href="#">Rep. Norton, Eleanor Holmes [D-DC-At Large]*</a>	10/08/2015
<a href="#">Rep. Gutierrez, Luis V. [D-IL-4]</a>	10/16/2015
<a href="#">Rep. Moore, Gwen [D-WI-4]</a>	10/16/2015
<a href="#">Rep. Cohen, Steve [D-TN-9]</a>	10/16/2015
<a href="#">Rep. Schakowsky, Janice D. [D-IL-9]</a>	10/20/2015

An \* indicates an original cosponsor. The date is the date they signed on.

To celebrate her entry into the social work profession, NASW CEO, Angelo McClain, and NASW Deputy Director of Programs, Heidi McIntosh, presented Rep. Karen Bass (D-CA-37) with a social worker pin after she graduated from the University of Southern California School of Social Work.

NASW President Darrell Wheeler, Angelo McClain and Heidi McIntosh met with Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) on October 22. NASW member Sen. Barbara Mikulski met with NASW officials to discuss various issues, including mental health, poverty, and health care, and to congratulate the association on its 60th Anniversary. You can see a blog post about the visit and pictures on the [Social Work Blog page](#).

As a follow up to their meeting on October 22, Sen. Mikulski requested and NASW provided input for the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing entitled, "Mental Health and Substance Abuse in America: Priorities, Challenges, and Opportunities" on October 29.

Also on October 29, Sen. Mikulski made a statement commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of NASW.

### **Other Legislative Activity**

On October 16, NASW wrote a letter in support of S. 1945, the Mental Health Reform Act, introduced by Sens. Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Chris Murphy (D-CT). This legislation is a comprehensive effort to improve the lives of individuals and families living with mental health conditions. It seeks to integrate physical and mental health, designate an Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use, establish new grant programs for early intervention, establish an Interagency Serious Mental Illness Coordinating Committee, establish a new National Mental Health Policy Laboratory, reauthorize successful research and grant programs, strengthen transparency and enforcement of mental health parity and improve mental health services within Medicare/Medicaid.

## **Meetings with Federal Agencies**

NASW has met with representatives at federal agencies, including the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary's office.

## **Meetings with Formal Partners**

NASW has met with partners, including the Clinical Social Work Association (CSWA), the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), and the American Psychological Association.

NASW has reached out to over 50 partner organizations in seeking sign on to a letter of support that will be forwarded to Sen. Stabenow and Rep. Lee.

## **Washington DC Hill Visits by Advocates**

NASW and CSWE co-hosted a group of 48 students who are Social Work Healthcare Education and Leadership Scholars in mid-November for a Policy Summit. On the second day of the Policy Summit, students participated in an Advocacy Day. They advocated for the Improving Access to Mental Health Act and the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. A few students were able to meet directly with their Members of Congress. NASW and CSWE will be following up with legislative offices based on the feedback from the students.

## **Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) Meeting**

Polsinelli staff attended the November MHLG meeting. Here is a summary of topics discussed.

1. Sensenbrenner-Scott Safe, Accountable, Fair and Effective (SAFE) Justice Reinvestment Act of 2015 (H.R. 2944):
  - Based on information garnered from the House Over Criminalization Task Force, Reps. Sensenbrenner (R-WI-5) and Scott (D-VA-3) were able to pull together this evidence based legislation, which currently has bipartisan support (29 R's, 29 D's)
  - This legislation is not aimed at the kingpins, but rather the lower level offenders – specifically those with mental health, substance abuse and veterans suffering from PTSD.
  - They are hoping that the savings from this legislation can be reinvested into social workers, addiction professionals and probation officers, by way of grants, to help offenders.
  
2. Mental Health Monday briefings and The Mental Health Awareness Semi-postal Stamp Act (H.R. 3640):
  - This is a bi-partisan bill [Curbelo (R-FL-26) and Napolitano (D-CA-32)] that would create a semi-postal mental health awareness stamp.
  - This stamp would be 60 cents compared to 49 cents for a normal stamp
  - The proceeds will go to #stamp out stigma, and to NIH's BRAIN Initiative

3. Monday Mental Health Briefings:

- Napolitano's office is now hosting Monday Mental Health Briefings
- These briefings will be at least 2-3 times a month.
- A member of the mental health community will come to Capitol Hill, brief the group on the issue at hand, and then open it up for dialogue.
- Other groups are welcome, but this is primarily for Congressional Members and staff.
- They have had one this month already, but suspect there will not be one in December given the busy schedule.

4. Student Support Act (H.R. 2375):

- Emma Mehrabi, LA in Congresswoman Lee's office spoke about the Student Support Act.
- This legislation was introduced earlier this summer and has been reintroduced since the 110th Congress.
- There are currently 15 cosponsors. They are all D's.
- This legislation would create at least \$1 million matching grants for additional school-based mental health and student service providers. This includes the minimum ration of 1 school social worker for every 250 students.
- Emma gave a shout out to social workers and asked if NASW was in the room – I let her know we were present.

Staff attended the September MHLG meeting. Here is a summary of topics discussed.

1. The UNITE to Face Addiction Rally is being held on October 4 in Washington, DC. There are over 600 partners, including NASW. This is the largest event staged for the recovery community. On October 5, there will be an Advocacy Day. As of the September 11 MHLG meeting, over 400 people were registered for Advocacy Day. On October 3, there will be a benefit comedy show.
2. The Anna Westin Act (H.R. 2515/S.1865) is a bi-partisan and bi-cameral piece of legislation that seeks to remove obstacles to obtaining mental health care. It is named after Anna Westin, who died by suicide after struggling with an eating disorder. The original sponsors in the House, are Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL-21) and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL-27). The original sponsors in the Senate are Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), and Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI). NASW has signed a letter in support of this legislation.

The bill seeks to train medical providers in mental health, promote truth in advertising and stop coverage denials.

3. The Chief of Staff at SAMHSA, Tom Coderre, came to the meeting to provide an opportunity for a discussion. Tom is in recovery himself. MHLG members commented about the need to show what we know in terms of recovery support. Tom noted that there is a Behavioral Health Inequality Subcommittee within HHS that tries to work on behavioral health issues across the agency. There was a suggestion that there is a need for a more robust recovery research agenda at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). One member asked about an update on a new Medical

Director at SAMHSA. Tom said that there will hopefully be an announcement soon. SAMHSA presents an accomplishments report to the Hill. Tom reminded everyone that September is Recovery Month.

### **Support Letters**

NASW has signed onto a number of letters of support. You can find a list of letters of support on our [web page](#). A sample of letters from September-November is below.

- [NASW signs onto letter urging Congress to restore proposed cuts in Final FY2016 Appropriations Bill \(11/12/15\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to ad-hoc letter supporting the Part D Beneficiary Appeals Fairness Act, H.R. 2624 \(11/10/15\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to ad-hoc letter supporting the Part D Beneficiary Appeals Fairness Act, S. 1488 \(11/10/15\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to letter promoting Safe, Healthy and Ready to Learn provisions in the ESEA bill \(11/6/15\)](#)
- [NASW signs letter to Urge Senate to Take Up the Mental Health Reform Act of 2015 \(S. 1945\) \(10/27/15\)](#)
- [NASW joins letter regarding Myths about VHA Health Care and Choice Program Expansion \(10/22/15\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to ad-hoc letter urging CMS to prohibit long-term care facilities from entering into predispute arbitration agreements with residents \(10/14/2015\)](#)
- [NASW signs MHLG Letter in Support of S. 1865, the Anna Westin Act \(10/2/15\)](#)
- [NASW signs MHLG Letter in Support of H.R. 2515, the Anna Westin Act \(10/2/15\)](#)
- [NASW signs onto Letter to House Energy and Commerce Committee Leaders Urging Passage of Meaningful Mental Health Reform \(10/1/15\)](#)
- [NASW Signs onto Letter Regarding Mental Health Provisions in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act \(10/1/15\)](#)

- NASW signs on to ad-hoc letter to Congress opposing projected increases to Medicare Part B deductible and premiums in calendar year 2016 (9/30/15)
- NASW signs on to Strengthen Social Security Coalition statement (9/29/15)
- NASW signs on to letter regarding Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization (9/25/15)
- NASW joins the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and other concerned national organizations in signing on to a letter to the Congressional Leadership to protect Planned Parenthood from major cuts in federal funding (9/24/15)
- NASW signs on to ad-hoc letter urging the Senate to oppose a proposed 42% cut in funding for the State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs) (9/17/15)
- NASW signs on to letter urging the House Energy & Commerce Committee to extend Health Information Technology Incentives to Behavioral Health (9/16/15)
- NASW supports strengthening protections against housing discrimination through the Fair Housing Act (9/14/15)
- NASW signs on to Fiscal Year 2016 Humanitarian Funding Letter (9/14/15)
- NASW joins other national organizations to protect safety-net programs from major cuts in funding due to Sequestration (9/10/15)
- NASW signs on to letter to Congress seeking to spare critical the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) program from program cuts (9/10/15)
- NASW signs on to ad-hoc letter supporting the Health Outcomes, Planning, and Education (HOPE) for Alzheimer's Act (9/8/2015)
- NASW signs on to letter to Attorney General Lynch to Investigate "Muslim-Free Zone" Bans by Public Accommodations (09/01/15)

NASW has also submitted its own comments to the Administration. You can find this list on our [web page](#) as well. A sample of comments from 2015 is below.

- [NASW responds to proposed rule reforming requirements for long-term care facilities, advocating for professional social work qualifications and improved social work staffing ratios \(10/14/15\)](#)
- [NASW submits comments to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services on the calendar year 2016 Physician Fee Schedule proposed rule \(9/8/2015\)](#)
- [NASW submits comments to the National Quality Forum on person-centered care for dually eligible beneficiaries \(7/27/15\)](#)
- [NASW submits comments to the White House Conference on Aging \(7/23/2015\)](#)
- [NASW encourages the Center for Medicaid and Medicare \(CMS\) to expand Medicaid coverage to include routine HIV screening to persons 15 years of age and older \(2/24/15\)](#)