



July 2019

Legislative: Advancing the Profession



Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 782/H.R. 1533): At the July 12 meeting of the Mental Health Liaison Group Health Policy Committee, NASW presented the Improving Access to Mental Health Act in an effort to generate additional organizational sign-ons for our letter to Congress. Currently, 12 national organizations have signed on and we continue to seek support from others. The legislation will provide a crucial step forward in access to mental health care for Medicare beneficiaries and in advancing pay equity for social workers. If you have not already done so, please [email your lawmaker](#) now to urge them to cosponsor. In the coming weeks we intend to engage congressional caucus members to ask for their sponsorship. NASW continues to work hard to advance this priority legislation.

The Workplace Violence Prevention for Healthcare and Social Service Workers Act (S. 851/H.R. 1309): The legislation would require organizations that employ healthcare and social service workers to have a workplace violence prevention plan in place. There are currently 197 cosponsors of the House bill and is pending a full House vote. Please [email your lawmaker](#) now to urge them to cosponsor.

Surprise Billing: NASW signs on to the [Families USA letter](#) to House leaders urging action to address surprise billing and enhance consumer protections.

Legislative: Social Justice

The Raise the Wage Act (H.R. 582): This bill passed the House on July 18. It raises the minimum wage to \$15/hour by 2025 and eliminates the subminimum wages for tipped and youth workers and workers with disabilities. NASW has signed onto letters of support. Now it moves to the Senate.

The Suicide & Threat Assessment Nationally Dedicated to Universal Prevention (STANDUP) Act (H.R. 2599): NASW signed on to a Sandy Hook Promise letter in support of the STANDUP Act. This bipartisan legislation is being led by Representatives Scott Peters (D-CA-52) and Gus Bilirakis (R-FL-12). The Act addresses the growing youth suicide crisis and school shootings by increasing the use of student suicide awareness and prevention trainings as well as school-based threat assessment teams. It accomplishes this by conditioning the receipt of certain grants under SAMHSA on state and tribal education agencies adopting these policies.

Immigration Advocacy: NASW continues to be deeply concerned about the care and treatment of children who have migrated with or without their families from the Northern Triangle countries in Central America and who are seeking asylum. NASW is engaging congressional leaders, working with coalitions and supporting new legislation to address this humanitarian crisis. NASW supports the **Stop Cruelty to Migrant Children Act (H.R. 3918 /S. 2113)** which would end family separations, strengthen protections for children and families, and provide standards to ensure that government funds are not used to traumatize or harm asylum seekers. Follow legislation, find resources and take action with NASW's [Child Migrant Protection Toolkit](#).



NASW has been invited to a meeting with Senate Minority Leader Schumer and other Senators along with other major national provider groups, to discuss the care and treatment of children and families who are seeking asylum from Northern Triangle countries. The meeting is planned for September.

Regulatory

Health Care Rights Law (Section 1557) Proposed Rule: NASW will be submitting comments on this [proposed rule](#) which undermines ACA non-discrimination protections based on transgender status and sex stereotyping and would severely threaten LGBT patients' access to all forms of health care. The proposed rule would create confusion among patients and providers about their rights and obligations, encourage hospitals to deny care to LGBT people, and enable insurance companies to deny transgender people coverage for health care services

that they cover for non-transgender people. Comments are due August 13. The [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) has more information on this proposed rule.

2020 Physician Fee Schedule for Medicare Proposed Rule: On July 29 [proposed revisions](#) to the Physician Fee Schedule for Medicare were released. These changes in Medicare billing will implicate clinical social workers and the provisions in NASW's **Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 782/H.R. 1533)**. NASW is preparing comments on the proposed rule that will be submitted by September 18. Social workers are encouraged to submit their own comments on this revision.

Revision of Categorical Eligibility in SNAP: This month, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) proposed changes which would limit household automatic eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). NASW will be submitting comments opposing this [proposed rule](#), which would eliminate SNAP benefits for 3.1 million individuals, take free school meals away from the children in those families, and punish people with even meager savings. Comments are due September 23. One of NASW's partner organizations, the Food Research and Action Center, has a [tool](#) you can use to send comments to the USDA.

Collaboration

The Medical Society Consortium on Climate & Health launched [The Call to Action on Climate, Health, and Equity: A Policy Action Agenda](#). NASW is a supporter of these policy objectives that will mitigate threats to the environment and human health. See [NBC News coverage](#) of this effort.



Coalition Advocates for Workforce to Serve Older Adults:

The Eldercare Workforce Alliance (EWA), in which NASW participates, recently completed a yearlong campaign commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Institute of Medicine's report *Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce*. Download EWA's [report](#) describing the *Together We Care* campaign and use the resources to support your policy advocacy.

Recording from National Older Adult MH Awareness Day Available: In May NASW participated in the second annual National Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day, cosponsored by the National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging (of which NASW is a member), the Administration for Community Living, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The topics discussed, such as suicide prevention and treatment of serious mental



illness and substance use disorders, have implications for local, state, and federal policy. Access a brief written summary and full [video recording](#) of the meeting.

Child Welfare Report: NASW staff attended an event where the First Star Institute released its 4th Edition of “[A National Report Card on Legal Representation for Abused and Neglected Children](#)”. The report card was the result of work done by the [Children’s Advocacy Institute](#) and [First Star Institute](#). The report indicated the extent to which states provided appropriate legal representation for children in the care of the state. Nineteen states received an “A” rating indicating that they provided quality legal representation for children in care. Eleven states received an “F” rating indicating that they fell short of providing legal representation.

Foster Care Transitioning: NASW staff attended an event hosted by [Camelot Community Care Inc.](#), an agency that provides referral and support to foster youth, and the Senate Caucus on Foster Youth. Six young people who were preparing for transition out of foster care presented. They shared the positive and the negative experiences of foster care including the loss that they felt when they were removed from siblings and the unpredictable multiple moves that they endured while in care. Despite Post-Secondary Education and Support, youth struggled with limited finances and expressed desire for support in job readiness and budgeting. All the youth on this panel seemed to have a determination to survive against all odds.

Foster Youth Internship Program: July 16 marked the 16th year of celebrating the [Foster Youth Internship Program](#). NASW staff attended a celebration of the anniversary. Youth in this program had the honor of interning on Capitol Hill. These youth honored their caseworkers and social workers for their efforts with creating positive outcomes for them. One of the youths admitted to blaming his caseworker for the difficulties he had in care until he realized that the “welfare system places unrealistic expectations and workload requirements on caseworkers.” Of the 12 youth who presented, four are pursuing degrees in Social Work and several of them have pursue studies and careers in foster care. You can read about these youth stories in their “[Boundless Futures: Building a Youth - Focused Child Welfare System.](#)”



NASW Resources

Climate Change and Health: A Call to Social Workers: Be sure to read this new Practice Perspective from NASW. Climate change is affecting the way people live and contributing to and exacerbating physical and mental health conditions. Social workers can integrate knowledge about the environment into practice to help individuals understand and manage the health consequences of climate change.

Get Involved! We encourage you to join [NASW’s Advocacy Listserv](#) to stay up-to-date on legislative, regulatory and other activity at the Federal level. We also have a variety of valuable [resources](#) on our web page to guide members in connecting with their lawmakers.

For questions about the Washington Update or to suggest content that you would like us to consider for inclusion in a future communication, please contact Dina Kastner, Senior Field Organizer, at dkastner.nasw@socialworkers.org.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), in Washington, D.C., is the largest membership organization of professional social workers. We promote, develop and protect the practice of social work and social workers and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through advocacy. [Become a member of NASW.](#)



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