



December 19, 2018

Legislative Activities:

The House and Senate passed a bi-partisan Farm Bill that protects SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) beneficiaries from additional work requirements originally included in the House version of the legislation. The bill passed in the Senate [87-13](#) and in the House [369-47](#), and is expected to be signed into law by the President. NASW worked in coalition with other advocacy organizations to help protect SNAP beneficiaries.

NASW staff have been participating in Hill visits for the Every Child Deserves a Family Act (S. 1303/H.R. 2640). This legislation increases the number of foster and adoptive homes by restricting federal funding for states employing discriminatory practices in adoption and foster care placements based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status of potential parents, as well as the sexual orientation or gender identity of foster youth.

As of this writing, the First Step Act (S. 3747) introduced by Sens. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) is very likely to become the first bipartisan comprehensive criminal justice reform bill to be signed into law in a generation. S.3747 was ultimately added as an amendment to unrelated legislation, the Save Our Seas Act of 2018 (S. 756). The Senate passed the legislation [87-12](#) on December 18, 2018. The House must now take up and pass the measure before it can be sent to the President and signed into law.

The key provisions of the First Step Act are aimed at reducing mandatory minimum sentences and excess sentences for non-violent offenses. The Act will allow judges to use more latitude in considering mitigating circumstances in determining certain sentences.

Additionally, the bill provides for funding for opioid prevention and treatment programs - and related reentry services - to reduce recidivism. It should also be noted that the First Step Act included the fully funded reauthorization of another critical criminal justice bill- **the Second Chance Act**.

Though NASW had some reservations about some aspects of the bill, NASW and most national criminal justice reform coalitions believe the sentencing reforms in the First Step Act outweigh those reservations. Therefore, NASW supports its passage.

Key NASW Legislation:

Although the 115th Congress is winding down, we ask that you continue to advocate for **S. 2613/H.R. 1290- Improving Access to Mental Health Act** by [asking your Senators and Representative to cosponsor today!](#) NASW is working to gain support for this bipartisan legislation introduced by Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY) that would increase public access to the vital mental health services that clinical social workers provide and offer clinical social workers more adequate Medicare reimbursement rates. S. 2613 is the Senate companion bill to the House version – H.R. 1290 – introduced by Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA-13) last year. A full list of cosponsors in the House can be found [here](#).

Don't forget to also weigh in on [H.R. 1484 the Social Worker Safety Act of 2017](#). This bipartisan legislation was introduced by Rep. Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ-09) with original cosponsor, Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY-21) and would help protect social workers as they perform needed work in the community. With the help of your advocacy efforts, we are now up to [5 bipartisan cosponsors](#) for H.R. 1484. We look forward to continuing the momentum for this vital piece of legislation by continuing to add cosponsors.

NASW continues to push for support of [H.R. 1289, Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr., Social Work Reinvestment Act](#), which currently has [19 cosponsors](#) and would help address challenges facing the profession's workforce.

Get involved! You can join [NASW's Advocacy Listserv](#) to stay up-to-date on Congressional activity. We also have [resources](#) on our web page to help in setting up visits with your members of Congress. For best practices on Congressional outreach, check out the [Indivisible Guide](#). We will be building off your incredible efforts in the new year when the 1st session of the 116th Congress commences on January 3, 2019. All legislation that was **not** enacted in the 115th session of Congress, will need to be reintroduced and assigned new bill numbers next year. NASW continues to work with our legislative champions on preparing for the new session. Please stay tuned for legislative updates in the coming year.

Administrative Activities:

During the 60-day comment period, the Administration received over 210,000 comments on their proposed "Public Charge" rule. NASW mobilized our members to provide comments and over 400 advocates took action.

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) [announced](#) it will launch the NHSC Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Program (SUD Workforce LRP), worth up to \$75,000 in loan forgiveness over three years. This program is designed to support the recruitment and retention of

health professionals needed in underserved areas to expand access to SUD treatment and prevent overdose deaths. While this program appears similar to the program created in H.R.6, SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act, the monies referenced in HRSA's announcement are actually derived from supplemental opioid funds included in the FY 19 appropriations bill. If you choose to apply, you will receive final notification of an award, including service obligation dates, no later than September 30th. Behavioral health professionals and substance use disorder counselors are amongst the disciplines and specialties eligible to apply to the NHSC SUD Workforce LRP, and applications receive priority if (1) you have a DATA 2000 waiver; (2) you serve in an opioid treatment program; or (3) you have a license or certification in substance use disorder interventions, such as master's-level substance use disorder counselors. The link above provides key additional details for the program.

Coalition and Collaborative Activities:

NASW participated in meetings of the following coalitions or other external initiatives:

- Eldercare Workforce Alliance
- Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO)
- Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
- Coalition on Human Needs
- Mental Health Liaison Group
- National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths
- National Child Abuse Coalition
- Protect Our Care Coalition
- Medicaid Coalition
- Child Welfare and Mental Health Coalition
- Elder Justice Coordinating Council (observed)

NASW Resources:

NASW staff created a practice alert titled: "[2019 MACRA Reporting for Clinical Social Workers in Private Practice.](#)"

Items of Note:

Older Americans Month 2019 theme announced. The Administration for Community Living (ACL) has announced the theme for the 2019 observance of Older Americans Month (OAM): [Connect. Create. Contribute.](#) ACL will post suggestions, resources, and materials for the observance on its [OAM Web site](#) in early 2019. Plan ahead to celebrate OAM with NASW in May.

Fellowship opportunity in aging and health policy. The [Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program](#) invites social workers to apply for the 2019–2020 program year. The program, which is supported by the Atlantic Philanthropies, the John A. Hartford Foundation, and West Health—and which is not affiliated with NASW—equips professionals to influence the development and implementation of [health policies that affect older adults](#). The program offers two options: (1) a residential option, consisting of nine to 12

months in Washington, D.C. or at a state agency, or (2) a one-year nonresidential option within the applicant's current organization (including the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs). [Informational calls](#) for potential applicants are through April 2; [applications](#) are due by April 15, 2019.

Older adult mental health focus of national observance. In May 2018, NASW participated in the first 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. [Access meeting materials](#) and save the date of May 20, 2019, for the second annual observance in Washington, DC.

Support Letters:

NASW has signed onto several letters of support. You can find a list of letters of support on our [web page](#). A sample of recent letters is listed below.

- [NASW signs on to community statement advocating for Medicare Part B coverage of medically necessary oral and dental health services \(12/6/2018\)](#)
- [NASW joins Families USA letter urging Congress to pursue policies that advance access to high quality, affordable health care \(11/15/2018\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to open letter urging the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to withdraw its proposed restructuring of Medicare payments for evaluation and management services \(9/10/2018\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to open letter urging Congress to add autoescalation of Medicare Part D appeals to the Independent Review Entity within the opioid legislation \(5/30/2018\)](#)

NASW has also submitted its own comments to the Administration and Congress. You can find this list on our [web page](#) as well.

- [NASW Requests New York Governor Cuomo to sign Mental Health and Substance Use Parity Law \(Dec. 6, 2018\)](#)
- [NASW joins over 80,000 individuals and organizations in submitting comments to oppose the Department of Homeland Security's immigration "public charge" rule \(Nov. 23, 2018\)](#)
- [NASW sends letter of support for the Senior Scams Prevention Act \(S. 3522\) \(Nov. 19, 2018\)](#)