

December 2019

Legislative: Advancing the Profession

Protecting Social Workers and Health Professionals from Workplace Violence Act (S. 2880/H.R. 5138): Our revamped legislation to promote social worker safety was introduced in the House and Senate on November 18th. The bills have been expanded to cover social workers as well as other professionals who face high rates of workplace violence in similar work settings, such as nurses, home health aides and caseworkers. This urgently needed, bipartisan legislation will strengthen workplace protections for social workers and health care professionals. Bill champions are Sens. Kyrsten Sinema, a social worker, (D-AZ) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Reps. Julia Brownley (D-CA-26) and Elise Stefanik (R-NY-21). The legislation will create a federal grant program within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to enable employers to purchase and deploy safety equipment (such as security cameras and GPS locators), make facility improvements, implement safety training programs, and provide support services for professionals who have been victims of violence. There is no state or local match required for these grants. You can [contact your congressional lawmakers](#) and urge them to cosponsor this legislation.

Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act (H.R. 1309): On November 21, this bipartisan legislation was approved by the full U.S. House of Representatives with a vote of 251-158. Please contact your U.S. Senators and urge them to cosponsor the companion bill, [S. 851](#), by responding to NASW's [action alert](#). S. 851/H.R. 1309 will require OSHA to institute a standard requiring employers to develop and implement workplace safety plans. If passed, these measures will be instrumental in promoting safer working conditions for millions of social workers, nurses and other similar professionals who experience unacceptably high levels of violence on the job.



Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 782/H.R. 1533):

This legislation will provide a crucial step forward in access to mental health care for Medicare beneficiaries and in advancing pay equity for social workers. Currently, 16 national organizations have endorsed the legislation through a [sign on letter](#). If you have not

already done so, please [email your lawmakers](#) now to urge them to cosponsor.

Federal Direct Graduate PLUS (Grad PLUS) Loan Program: NASW signed onto letters to support the Federal Direct Graduate Plus (Grad PLUS) Loan Program. Grad PLUS provides a critical pathway for graduate and professional students to finance their degrees, and as a result, enter the U.S. workforce as highly-educated and qualified professionals. As the Education and Labor Committee continues its bipartisan efforts to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, we urge members to preserve Grad PLUS and send emails to the

- [Education and Labor Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment](#).
- [Tri-Caucus](#).

Legislative: Social Justice

The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (S. 2843): Senate Judiciary Committee Ranking Member Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) has introduced the Senate companion to the legislation approved by the House.

The bill, which would reauthorize VAWA through 2024, preserves advancements made in previous reauthorizations and includes additional improvements to the current law. Please urge your Senators to cosponsor [S. 2843](#).



Older Americans Act (OAA) (H.R. 4334) Reauthorization: NASW applauds the House of Representatives for its unanimous passage of the Dignity in Aging Act ([H.R. 4334](#)) in late October. This bill would reauthorize the OAA through September 2024 and among other improvements, increase total funding by more than 35 percent during the five-year reauthorization period. The Senate is considering H.R. 4334 while working to create its own bill. Read an [NASW-supported sign-on letter](#) thanking the House for passing H.R. 4334. NASW will update members when grassroots advocacy for OAA reauthorization is needed.

Home Visiting to Reduce Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Act (H.R. 4768): NASW signs on to letter of support for Rep. Danny K. Davis' (D-IL-7) bill that would double the federal government's investment in evidence-based home visiting—from \$400 million to \$800 million over a two-year period through the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program—to reach more families and address risk factors associated with maternal mortality and morbidity.

Improving Low-Income Tax Credits: NASW participated in a **Call-In Day of Action** on November 6 asking Senators to support improving low-income tax credits, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) as they consider adding bipartisan tax legislation to the end-of-year budget package. The EITC and CTC help working families and individuals better provide for basic needs. These two tax credits together lifted 8.9 million people out of poverty in 2018, and helped millions more, and with improvements they can do more to alleviate poverty and help low-income families keep up with the increasing cost of living.



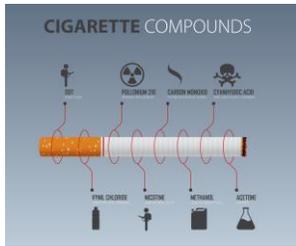
The Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act (H.R. 3884): The House Judiciary Committee passed H.R. 3884 on Nov. 20th by a vote of 24-10. The MORE Act aims to correct the historical injustices of failed drug policies that have disproportionately impacted communities of color and low-income communities by decriminalizing marijuana at the federal level, reassessing marijuana convictions, and investing in local communities. The MORE Act will de-schedule marijuana on the Drug Enforcement Agency's dangerous drug schedule. The MORE Act also has provisions for expunging the records of individuals arrested and/or convicted of simple possession of marijuana, and the bill creates a trust fund from a 5% surcharge on the legal marijuana industry. The trust fund would be used to provide substance use treatment and research. Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY-10) is the lead sponsor and Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA) introduced the companion bill in the Senate. NASW is a partner organization with the Marijuana Reform Working Group which worked closely on the MORE Act with the House Judiciary Committee, Rep. Barbara Lee's (D-CA-13) office and others to help with the language in the bill.



Assault Weapons Ban of 2019 (H.R. 1296): Assault weapons such as the AR-15 are the weapon of choice for mass shooters in America because they are uniquely lethal. NASW has partnered with Brady to renew the ban on assault weapons. Brady led the fight to pass the original assault weapons ban. Now, we urgently need to renew the ban before more people are killed. If your [House representative still hasn't signed on](#) to this legislation, please send them this [prewritten email](#), and personalize it, urging them to cosponsor the bill.

Regulatory

Medicare Reimbursement for CY 2020: The [CY 2020 Physician Fee Schedule Final Rule](#) was published on November 1. NASW is reviewing the final rule and will provide an update on the key provisions and implication of the rule in the coming weeks. Clinical social workers who are Medicare providers will receive a 4% increase in reimbursement under the rule.



Graphic Cigarette Warnings:

NASW signed on to comments from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids Coalition regarding FDA’s proposed rule, Tobacco Products; Required Warnings for Cigarette Packages and Advertisements (FDA-2019-N-3065). The comments support the rule’s proposal to mandate graphic warnings on cigarettes packages and in advertisements to help combat tobacco use.

Long-Term Care Proposed Rule: In September NASW submitted [comments](#) to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) on a proposed rule that would weaken requirements for Medicare- and Medicaid-certified long-term care (LTC) facilities. In its comments, NASW urged CMS to retain the current requirements regarding the handling of resident grievances, the use of antipsychotic medications, compliance and ethics, among other topics.

Executive

Elder Justice Priorities: In September the association [submitted comments](#) to the Administration for Community Living (ACL) regarding priorities for the [Elder Justice Coordinating Council](#) (EJCC). These comments addressed the ways in which the council:

- benefits NASW and the social work profession
- could support the creation and enhancement of state-level systems of services and supports
- could benefit the elder justice community as a whole
- could measure its impact and effectiveness on state systems and on survivors of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.



ACL [welcomes comments](#) on the EJCC through December 31.



Federal Geriatrics Workforce Grants Awarded to Social Workers: The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has awarded grants for both the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) and the Geriatrics Academic Career Awards (GACA) program. Both grants enhance the capacity of the health care workforce to serve older adults.

Among the 26 [GACA grantees](#) are two social workers, Samantha Cotton (University of Louisville) and Bronwyn Keefe (Boston University). The 48 [GWEP grantees](#) include at least five featuring social workers in leadership roles:

- [Louisiana State University \(LSU\)](#)—Scott Wilks, gerontology specialization coordinator at LSU Social Work, is principal investigator; NASW Louisiana (LA) Chapter members Cassie Dinecola and Catherine Lemieux, both LSU faculty, are coinvestigators; and LA Chapter member and LSU Social Research and Evaluation Center Director Judith Rhodes was instrumental in securing the grant.

- **Northeast Ohio Medical University**—Social worker Margaret Sanders, assistant professor of family and community medicine, directs the grant.
- **Rush University Medical Center**—NASW Illinois (IL) Chapter member Robyn Golden, associate vice president of population health and aging at Rush, codirects the project; IL member and Northwestern University faculty Darby Morhardt and the IL Chapter itself are among the project partners.
- **University of Montana (UM)**—Keith Anderson, UM professor of social work, directs the project.
- **University of Southern Indiana**—Social worker Katie Ehlman, professor of gerontology and director of the Center for Healthy Aging and Wellness, is principal investigator.

Find information on [all HRSA workforce grants](#).

Collaboration



Mental Health for US Campaign for 2020: NASW has joined [Mental Health for US](#), an educational coalition working to ensure that improving treatment for mental health and addiction is a top priority during the 2020 election and beyond. Access NASW’s [press release](#). Events are scheduled for December 16 (New Hampshire) and January 13 (California); additional events are also planned.

Society for Social Work Leadership in Health Care Conference:

NASW staff participated in the Annual Society for Social Work Leadership in Health Care Conference that was held in Kansas City, MO from October 20-22. NASW presented on the findings of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine study, [Integrating Social Care into the Delivery of Health Care: Moving Upstream to Improve the Nation’s Health](#). NASW will be conducting a webinar on January 15 on this study and its implications for all social workers, not just those in healthcare-related roles. Study committee members will present. Stay tuned for more details.



National Family Caregivers Month: Join NASW in celebrating National Family Caregivers Month in November. This year’s theme, established by the Caregiver Action Network, is [#BeCareCurious](#). Find information from the [Family Caregiver Alliance](#) and the [National Alliance for Caregiving](#) and download the [NASW Standards for Social Work Practice with Family Caregivers of Older Adults](#) to inform your policy advocacy on behalf of family caregivers. Access recordings and summaries of the inaugural meetings of the [RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council](#) and the [Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Advisory Council](#).



Recent Aging-Focused Events: In addition to ongoing participation in multiple aging-focused coalitions and external initiatives focused on older adults, NASW staff recently participated in the following special events:

- AARP Executive Summit, *The Price of Caring 2019* (focused on family caregiving)
- American Society on Aging roundtable, *LGBT Older Adults—Services & Advocacy*
- Center for Advancing Holocaust Survivor Care training workshop, *Aging & Trauma: Innovations in Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed Care for Diverse Older Populations*

NASW Resources



NASW Practice Alert: 2020 Health Insurance Marketplace Open Enrollment

The Open Enrollment period to register for health insurance coverage for 2020 began on Friday, November 1st and ends on December 15th. Social workers have an important role in educating individuals about the benefits of health insurance and connecting them to coverage.

NASW Practice Perspectives: Improving Transitions for U.S. Military Veterans

This Practice Perspectives describes recent federal initiatives that help support exiting service members and connect them to health resources.



NASW Practice Alert on Dispute Resolution Rights of Long-Term Care Facility Residents:

This publication, released by NASW in October, provides an overview of a controversial and longstanding issue: use of predispute binding arbitration agreements between facilities and residents. Learn about the recent CMS final rule on this topic and how you can advocate to promote the rights of facility residents.

Other

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Consensus Study on Integrating Social Care into the Delivery of Health Care: This study, released in September, outlines numerous recommendations that have implications for social work policy, practice and professional development. The study, which recognizes social workers as “specialists in social care”, recommends that regulatory agencies expand the scopes of practice of social workers in order to build the workforce to address the social (e.g. non-medical) factors that play a key role in health outcomes. These factors, also called the social determinants of health, include stable housing, reliable transportation and economic security. There is consistent and compelling evidence that addressing the social factors in health is critical in improving prevent and treatment of acute and chronic illnesses. The study also calls for the adequate payment of

social workers to ensure a sufficient social care workforce.¹ NASW will be conducting a webinar on the study January 15 from 2:30-3:30 PM (Eastern). Presenters include two social workers who were on the study committee: [Robyn Golden, LCSW, Professor and Associate Vice President of Population Health and Aging, Rush University](#) and [Tamara Cadet, PhD, LICSW, MPH, Associate Professor, Simmons School of Social Work](#). Stay tuned for more details. Other events are also planned through NASW state chapters.

Elder justice resources and event: The National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) recently published [three documents](#) that can help social workers advocate for elder abuse prevention and response:

- *Elder Abuse Annual Research Compilation*, available in English
- *Neglect and Emotional Abuse*, fact sheets developed with the National Asian Pacific Center on Aging and available in Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, Samoan, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

NCEA is funded by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) and based at the University of Southern California (USC) Keck School of Medicine; NASW serves on the NCEA Advisory Board. Additionally, registration is open and three scholarships are available for the biannual [USC Judith D. Tamkin Symposium on Elder Abuse](#). The symposium will take place on February 27 and 28 in Pasadena, California. Presenters include three social workers: Georgia Anetzberger (NASW Ohio Chapter member), David Burnes (Canada), and Stephanie Eliason (ACL). Social work CEUs will not be provided.



Health and Aging Policy Fellows: The 2019–2020 cohort of the Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program includes two social workers: Nancy Kusmaul, a member of the NASW Maryland Chapter, and Laural Traylor. Learn about the projects of these social workers and other cohort members; apply for the 2020–2021 cohort by April 15. This program, which is unaffiliated with NASW, is supported by the Atlantic

Philanthropies, the John A. Hartford Foundation, and West Health.

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.

¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2019, September). Integrating Social Care into the Delivery of Health Care: Moving Upstream to Improve the Nation's Health. Retrieved from <http://nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2019/integrating-social-care-into-the-delivery-of-health-care>

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers representing the interests of over 700,000 social workers nationwide. 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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