



July 26, 2016

Improving Access to Mental Health Act of 2015 (S.2173/H.R. 3712)

Since launching our action alert in October, 2015, 1,801 advocates sent 5,975 emails to Congress about the *Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 2173/H.R. 3712)*. You can find the alert on our [web site](#). Please consider sending an editable email to your Members of Congress.

NASW members are still working on securing GOP support for the *Improving Access to Mental Health Act of 2015 (S.2173/H.R. 3712)*, which is important to social workers nationwide.

Co-sponsors of the legislation include: (** indicates original sponsor; * indicates original cosponsor)

Senate

- Sen. Stabenow, Debbie [D-MI]** 10/08/2015
- Sen. Mikulski, Barbara A. [D-MD]* 10/08/2015
- Sen. Murphy, Christopher S. [D-CT] 02/25/2016
- Sen. Blumenthal, Richard [D-CT] 04/07/2016

House of Representatives

- Rep. Lee, Barbara [D-CA-13]** 10/08/2015
- Rep. Ashford, Brad [D-NE-2] 12/09/2015
- Rep. Bordallo, Madeleine Z. [D-GU-At Large]* 10/08/2015
- Rep. Brown, Corrine [D-FL-5]* 10/08/2015
- Rep. Clarke, Yvette D. [D-NY-9]* 10/08/2015

- Rep. Cohen, Steve [D-TN-9] 10/16/2015
- Rep. DeFazio, Peter A. [D-OR-4] 04/11/2016
- Rep. Grijalva, Raul M. [D-AZ-3]* 10/08/2015
- Rep. Gutierrez, Luis V. [D-IL-4] 10/16/2015
- Rep. Honda, Michael M. [D-CA-17]* 10/08/2015
- Rep. McCollum, Betty [D-MN-4] 12/09/2015
- Rep. Moore, Gwen [D-WI-4] 10/16/2015
- Rep. Norton, Eleanor Holmes [D-DC-At Large]* 10/08/2015
- Rep. Schakowsky, Janice D. [D-IL-9] 10/20/2015
- Rep. Serrano, Jose E. [D-NY-15] 03/14/2016
- Rep. Watson Coleman, Bonnie [D-NJ-12]* 10/08/2015

NASW has secured supporters of the legislation, listed below:

- American Geriatrics Society
- Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
- Clinical Social Work Association
- Council on Social Work Education
- Justice in Aging
- NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
- National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders
- National Coalition for Care Coordination (N3C)
- National League for Nursing
- The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care

As part of the NASW National Conference, we hosted an Advocacy Program on Capitol Hill on June 22, 2016. The Advocacy Program was a huge success. We had participants from 35 chapters make 149 appointments.

On July 25, 2016, NASW hosted a webinar for members on the political process and specifically the *Improving Access to Mental Health Act of 2015*. Participants learned about what NASW is doing to promote the bill and how they can get involved. Over 600 individuals registered for the webinar and it will be available on demand through the [NASW Professional Education and Training Center](#) in a couple of weeks.

Other Legislative Activity

Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act: The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA), S. 524/H.R. 953 passed the House and Senate. It was signed into law by President Obama on July 22, 2016. NASW sent a letter of support on CARA.

House's Mental Health Reform Legislation: On July 6, legislators passed the [Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act \(H.R. 2646\)](#) by an overwhelming vote of 422-2. NASW sent a letter to the House Energy

and Commerce Committee asking them to include the Improving Access to Mental Health Act legislation in the bill.

Senate's Mental Health Reform Act of 2016: At press time, the Senate has yet to vote on the Mental Health Reform Act of 2016. NASW wrote a letter of support about the Senate bill.

Family First Prevention Services Act: NASW signed on to support bipartisan, bicameral Family First Prevention Services Act, H.R. 5456. This legislation represents an historic step forward by better aligning federal child welfare funding with improved outcomes and goals for children and families who come into contact with the child welfare system. For more information visit

<http://waysandmeans.house.gov/theyre-saying-family-first-prevention-services-act/>

Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Language: **NASW and CSWE worked with Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA-13) to include language in the Fiscal Year 17 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Bill Draft Committee Report related to Behavioral Workforce Education and Training which explicitly includes social workers.**

The language reads as follows:

Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training

The Committee recommends \$50,000,000 for the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Grant Program. Eligible entities for this program shall include accredited programs that train **Master's level social workers**, psychologists, counselors, marriage and family therapists, psychology doctoral interns, as well as behavioral health paraprofessionals. The Committee directs HRSA to share information concerning pending grant opportunity announcements with State licensing organizations and all the relevant professional associations.

It can be a challenge to get language added to an Appropriations Report and we are glad to announce that this language is in the draft Committee Report.

NASW and the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) hold a Congressional Briefing on the Child Welfare Workforce

Let's Improve Child Welfare Outcomes: The Workforce Matters was held on June 28th and aimed to educate key policymakers in Washington and on Capitol Hill about the importance of a well-trained, educated and staffed workforce within child welfare. The Administration as well as others have suggested strategies to strengthen the workforce and this briefing highlighted some of these strategies. Speakers included:

- Christine James-Brown, President and CEO, Child Welfare League of America
- Jenny Wood, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Helen Cahalane, PhD, ACSW, LCSW, University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work
- Barry Chaffkin, LCSW, Fostering Change for Children
- Brandi Stocksdales, BSW, MSW, Baltimore City Department of Social Services

- Angelo McClain, PhD, LICSW, CEO, National Association of Social Workers.

This briefing was moderated by Joan Levy Zlotnik, PhD, ACSW, National Association of Social Workers. *Video of this session will be available and shared in the near future.*

This briefing was held in collaboration with the Senate Foster Youth Caucus and the Congressional Social Work Caucus.

Coalition Work

NASW participated in coalition work with:

- Eldercare Workforce Alliance
- Leadership Council of Aging Organizations
- National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging
- Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
- Coalition on Human Needs
- Behavioral Health Information Technology Coalition
- National Coalition on Care Coordination (N3C)

Social Justice Priority Area

Criminal Justice/Drug Policy

June 2, 2016

Coalition to Stop Opioid Overdose (CSOO)- Conference call

This national coalition comprised of over 100 public health, drug policy and addictions groups that were organized to address the heroin/opioid epidemic. CSOO focused its energies in getting the Comprehensive Addictions and Recovery Act (CARA). This conference call was to provide updated legislative progress information on CARA and to encourage participating coalition members to encourage their networks to contact members of Congress about the need to pass CARA. NASW staff participated on the call.

June 3, 2016

UNGASS Debrief ONDCP Meeting Prep Call

This is a follow-up to NASW's participation in drug policy coalitions that seek to respond to key policy, treatment and prevention issues related to illicit and prescription drug abuse. This call was to plan for an upcoming meeting with the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)

July 7, 2016

By invitation, NASW social justice and health policy staff attended the National Drug Policy (ONDCP) post UNGASS stakeholder meeting. to discuss the results of UNGASS as well as priorities, challenges, and opportunities between now and the end of the year. Staff was asked to give remarks and participate in open discussions.

June 8, 2016

White House Office of National Drug Control Policy conference call to update national drug policy organizations, treatment and prevention provider organizations and advocates on the progress the

White House is making on steps to address the opioid and heroin epidemic. The call focused on CARA and on date related to a continued problem with drug abuse. NASW staff participated on the call.

Social Justice Priority Area

Criminal Justice

June 7, 2016

Justice Roundtable Quarterly Assembly

NASW is a member of this criminal/juvenile justice coalition comprised of close to 100 national organizations. The quarterly assembly brings together coalition members for legislative and policy discussions, working group reports, and a presentation from a prominent criminal justice advocate. NASW participates on several Justice Roundtable Working Groups.

June 13, 2016

NASW staff attended and participated in the monthly National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA) “Brown Bag” meeting. The NCJA meeting brings together many law enforcement, state and county government, and national associations together to discuss national criminal justice legislation/policies. This month’s discussion was on the status of CARA and the National Corrections and Sentencing Reform Act.

June 16, 2016

NASW staff attended the Federal Policing Coalition meeting held at the Open Society Foundation. NASW is a regular member of this coalition that has a purpose of reviewing and making recommendations on federal policing policy issues including the use of community-policing; funding body-worn cameras for all police and law enforcement agencies; advocating for uniform dis-aggregated data collection on traffic stops, use of force incidents and police incidents involving persons with disabilities – especially mental illness.

June 30, 2016

NASW social justice staff participated as a part of a coalition dealing with federal reentry and solitary confinement with the Acting Director of the federal Bureau of Prisons and his key staff. NASW’s contribution to the discussion centered on the mental health needs of inmates-including those housed in segregation units. Staff also discussed workforce issues in terms of expanding the number of social workers as direct mental health providers in BOP prisons.

July 11, 2016

As a member of the Policing Working Group, NASW social justice staff was a panel member for a presentation to the UN’s Special Rapporteur on Human Rights on the issue of “The Role of Police during Political Protests. Each panel member had an opportunity to make a three minute statement and engage in a dialogue with the UN Rapporteur. The UN’s Special Rapporteur on Human Rights is in the process of visiting several major U.S. cities and listening to a variety of social justice and human rights groups.

July 18, 2016

NASW social justice staff was invited to attend a joint Center for American Progress and WH Office of Public Engagement forum on the policy and service needs of criminal justice involved persons with

disabilities, including mental health and physical disabilities. The meeting included opening remarks by Valerie Jarrett and several panel discussions.

Social Justice Priority Area
Criminal Justice/Gun Violence

June 21, 2016

NASW staff attended and participated in the White House Big Table Meeting to participate. The conversation focused on communities impacted by the tragic shooting in Orlando. The White house staff gave a briefing on outreach to communities after the shooting and the important work that everyone can do to help prevent future gun-violence tragedies.

July 12, 2016

NASW social justice staff attended the weekly WH Office of Public Engagement “Big Table” meeting. The meeting was a special even to focused on the tragic events of Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Falcon Heights, Minnesota; and Dallas, Texas. This conversation took place at the EEOB auditorium and included a briefing by WH staff and well as Q&A from the audience.

Social Justice Priority Area
Juvenile Justice/Education

June 27, 2016

NASW social justice staff accepted an invitation from the Department of Education to participate in a listening session dealing with the intersection between education and juvenile justice involved youth, especially planning for their transition out of juvenile detention. Items for discussion included:

- Walk-thru Overview Slide
- Feedback
- What are the key elements of a successful transition?
- Identify state and local promising practices.
- Discuss opportunities to change existing transition procedures.

Social Justice Sub-Priority Area
Judicial Nominations

June 17, 2016

NASW staff attended regularly scheduled Judicial Nominations Committee meeting. Each participant was asked to report out their effort to disseminate Judge Garland information at events. NASW reaffirm it would disseminate information at its conference.

Social Justice Priority Area
Economic Justice

June 29, 2016

NASW staff accepted an invitation to a discussion on Rules for a Fair Economy at the Washington Hilton Hotel. The keynote speaker was Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez who spoke of the new overtime rules aimed at aiding low-income workers.

July 14, 2016

NASW staff attended the monthly Transportation Equity Caucus meeting. The Equity Caucus is a 110-member national coalition of diverse organizations dealing with disparities in access to and funding transportation projects for low-income minorities, low income persons living in rural and suburban areas, and special accommodations for the disabled. The main issue is the work to reauthorize the T-HUD legislation that includes HUD and DOT programs.

Social Justice Sub-Priority Area
Health Disparities/Social Determinants of Health

June 24, 2016

NASW participated in an Elder Abuse briefing at the White House. This briefing, for senior and aging-focused organizations, covered workforce involvement, community service, housing, transportation, elder justice, and healthcare issues.

June 30, 2016

NASW Social Justice Staff participated in a SAMHSA webinar on *The National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care (the National CLAS Standards)*. The standards are intended to advance health equity, improve quality, and help eliminate health care disparities by providing a blueprint for individuals and health and health care organizations to implement culturally and linguistically appropriate services. Adoption of these Standards will help advance better health and health care in the United States.

Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) Meeting

1. There will be no meeting in August. The next meetings are September 2 and October 14.
2. Children's Access to Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Act (H.R. 5462) – Kate Petersen, Legislative Assistant, Office of Congressman Dave Loebsack (D-IA-2)

Rep. Loebsack is looking for organizations to sign a letter of support for the legislation.

The bill would boost reimbursement for administrative costs related to Medicaid. As of 2001, Iowa has 35 child psychiatrists for the entire state. They have moved to Medicaid managed care. Many mental health services providers are being kicked out with reimbursement rates cutting by half. There is a spike in adolescent suicides and jails are doing much of the work that mental health providers could do.

The bill looks to work through primary care to help provide mental health care. There would be a hotline for primary care providers to reach mental health providers for consultations when they encounter patients with mental health issues.

This program has been included as a grant program in mental health reform legislation.

The focus is on building an infrastructure; does not pay for services.

At this point there are no Republicans on the bill. It is hard to get them on because of the costs.

The coalition of members who are working on the Energy & Commerce Democratic alternative to mental health reform legislation in the House will continue into the next Congress.

3. Coalition Updates

They are looking for sign ons for the Campus Mental Health Act.

H.R. 2646 (mental health reform) was scheduled for a vote on July 6. It is expected to pass the House. It is not a perfect bill, but it is a step in the right direction. SAMHSA is OK with the current language in the bill.

Senate leadership is planning to hold a vote on mental health reform in September. It would be great to set up recess meetings with Senators about mental health reform.

Gun violence prevention – issues stay separate.

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 May and June is below.

- [NASW signs onto letter to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services about the Excellence in School-based Medicaid \(06/27/16\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to Leadership Council of Aging Organizations letter to the House of Representatives, urging protection of pensions for Puerto Rican public employees and retirees as part of debt crisis legislation \(6/8/2016\)](#)
- [NASW signs on letter Opposing Extra \\$18 Billion for Pentagon Amendment \(06/07/16\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to letter urging U.S. House members to include health information technology incentives for mental health and substance use providers in mental health legislation \(06/02/16\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to ad-hoc letter urging the House of Representatives to increase funding in fiscal year 2017 for the Lifespan Respite Care Program, the National Family Caregiver Support Program, and the Native American Caregiver Support Program \(5/17/2016\)](#)

- [NASW signs on to ad-hoc letter urging the Senate to increase funding in fiscal year 2017 for the Lifespan Respite Care Program, the National Family Caregiver Support Program, and the Native American Caregiver Support Program \(5/17/2016\)](#)

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 June is below.

- [NASW provides comments on the National Institute of Mental Health's Request for Information on the State of Mental Illness Research \(06/30/16\)](#)