



March 8, 2019

Legislative

NASW has been working with our Congressional champions to reintroduce and advance much-needed legislation related to the social work profession, including reimbursement. We are delighted to report Rep. Barbara Lee, MSW (D-CA), who chairs the Congressional Social Work Caucus and has been a key House ally, reintroduced:

Improving Access to Mental Health Act (H.R. 1533): This bill would ensure:

- Medicare beneficiaries' access to clinical social workers by increasing the Medicare reimbursement rate for clinical social workers from 75% to 85% of the physician fee schedule rate
- Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) residents' access to clinical social workers by excluding clinical social work services from SNF consolidated billing
- Medicare beneficiaries' access to Health and Behavior Assessment and Intervention services provided by clinical social workers.

Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act (H.R. 1532):

Calls for the creation of a Social Work Reinvestment Commission to provide independent counsel to Congress and the Secretary of Health and Human Services on policy issues related to recruitment, retention, research and reinvestment in the profession of social work.

Workplace Safety: NASW is working on several fronts to reduce the staggering and increasing number of assaults of social workers:

- **Workplace Violence Prevention for Healthcare and Social Service Workers Act (H.R. 1309):** NASW CEO Dr. Angelo McClain testified before the House Education and Labor Workplace Protections Subcommittee in support of this bill, which would make it a mandatory federal requirement for many types of health and social service workplaces to have a violence prevention plan. The bill's lead sponsor is Rep. Joe Courtney (D-CT). Workplace violence prevention plans would articulate how hazards are identified as well as specific mitigation measures (such as security alarms, barrier protection, etc.) and annual in-person training on the plan would be required. Covered settings include hospitals, residential treatment facilities, social service settings in correctional or detention facilities, psychiatric treatment facilities, substance use disorder treatment centers, community care settings, and federal health care facilities, as well as field work settings such as home care and home-based hospice. You can view the live stream of the hearing on the [Education and Labor Committee's website](#). NASW will continue working with its allies to advocate for passage of this critical legislation as it moves through the committee process.
- **Social Worker Safety Act:** NASW is working with its Congressional allies to reintroduce this important legislation, which would establish a Social Worker Safety Grant Program within the Department of Health and Human Services to fund States' efforts to improve safety measures for social workers. It would allow these grants to be used to purchase safety equipment, make facility improvements, facilitate safety training programs, provide support services for social workers who have been victims of violence or track incident data to mitigate future offenses against social workers.

Geriatrics Workforce Improvement Act (S. 299): This bipartisan bill, reintroduced by Sens. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Bob Casey (D-PA), seeks to improve health outcomes for older adults by reauthorizing funding for the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) and by reestablishing the Geriatric Academic Career Awards (GACA), a previously funded program for developing academic clinical educators specializing in aging. Clinical social workers are among the professionals eligible for GACA, and social workers are among the professionals eligible for interdisciplinary training through GWEP. Read [NASW's letter of support](#) for this bill.

Stop Senior Scams Act (S. 149): This bipartisan bill, reintroduced by Senators Bob Casey (D-PA) and Jerry Moran (R-KS), establishes a Senior Scams Prevention Advisory Council that will engage in various activities to mitigate financial exploitation of older adults. Read [NASW's letter of support](#) for this bill.

Bipartisan Background Checks Act (H.R. 8): H.R. 8 passed the House of Representatives on February 27 by a vote of 240-190. This bill – which requires background checks on all firearm sales – is one of the most significant gun-related pieces of legislation since the original Brady Background Check bill was passed more than two decades ago. NASW proudly partnered with the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence on advocating for passage of H.R. 8. The bill includes an [amendment](#) requiring gun sellers to notify Immigration and Customs Enforcement when an

undocumented immigrant tries to buy a gun. The bill now goes to the Senate where NASW will advocate for the chamber to take up and pass the measure.

Raise the Wage Act (H.R. 582/S.150): The Raise the Wage Act would raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2024. The bill was reported out of the Education and Labor Committee on March 6. NASW will work with its allies to push for enactment.

Get Involved! We encourage you to join [NASW's Advocacy Listserv](#) to stay up-to-date on Congressional activity. We also have a variety of valuable [resources](#) on our web page to guide members in connecting with their lawmakers.

Regulatory

Healthy People 2030: In January NASW submitted [comments](#) to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on the Healthy People 2030 proposed objectives for HHS' consideration. NASW will submit comments on the Pain Management Best Practice Inter-Agency Task Force Draft Report by the April 1 deadline. The public is invited to provide comments on the [Draft Report on Pain Management Best Practices: Updates, Gaps, Inconsistencies, and Recommendations](#). The report, required by the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 [Public Law 114-198] and developed by the Pain Management Best Practices Inter-Agency Task Force, is intended to identify gaps or inconsistencies in pain management.

Judicial

Criminal Justice Reform: In a February 20 [decision in *Timbs v. Indiana*](#), the United States Supreme Court held that the long-standing inequity in the nation's criminal justice system of state and local jurisdictions' use of asset forfeiture must comply with the Eighth Amendment's prohibition against excessive fines. Many facing asset forfeiture are non-violent, low-income offenders. The unanimous ruling held that the Constitution's ban on excessive fines applies not only to the federal government, but to state and local governments as well. This decision limits the ability of state and local governments to use such fines and property forfeitures to raise revenues.

Other

William Barr's Appointment to head the Department of Justice: Although William Barr was confirmed on February 14 to become Attorney General of the United States, NASW joined the Leadership Conference for Civil and Human Rights and over 74 organization in [expressing deep concerns](#) about his selection. Our concerns were based on Mr. Barr's positions on voting rights enforcement, LGBTQ rights, his continued embrace of the failed "war on drugs", and his positions on immigration policies.

Collaboration

Society for Social Work Leadership in Health Care: On February 7, NASW staff participated in a call with social work and other allied organizations, convened by the Society for Social Work Leadership in Health Care. Participating organizations include the Association of VA Social Workers, Society of Critical Care Medicine, Home Care Association of America and several others. The purpose of the group is to share trends, discuss upcoming events and opportunities for collaboration, and align advocacy efforts.

Eldercare Workforce Alliance: The Eldercare Workforce Alliance (EWA), of which NASW is a member, has released [policy principles](#) on the role of immigrants in the workforce serving older adults. NASW was a primary contributor to the publication. EWA will use the principles in its advocacy on behalf of older adults.

Center for Advancing Holocaust Survivor Care

The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) Center for Advancing Holocaust Survivor Care has awarded \$4.6 million in federal grant funding to enhance person-centered, trauma-informed services for Holocaust survivors. NASW served on the review committee for the grant, which is funded by the Administration for Community Living. If continued funding is approved by the federal government, JFNA intends to issue a request for new proposals this summer. Learn more about the [JFNA Center for Holocaust Survivor Care](#) and about the [new grants](#) issued to 43 direct service agencies and six Jewish federations.

Older Americans Month: Materials for [Older Americans Month 2019](#), an annual NASW-supported observance in May, are now available from the Administration for Community Living. Use these materials in your policy advocacy on behalf of, and in collaboration with, older adults.

LGBTQ Youth Leadership Summit: On February 13, NASW staff participated in a LGBTQ Youth Leadership Summit, Time to Thrive, hosted by the Human Rights Campaign and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Summit participants included over 20 national organizations and focused on addressing the psychosocial challenges confronting LGBTQ youth. The Summit concluded with a consensus conclusion by participating organizations that the next step will be to form a national coalition of stakeholders providing services and support for vulnerable LGBTQ youth. NASW will be a coalition member.