



October 11, 2017

**Legislative Activities:**

Thank you to all of our members for all your calls, emails, and letters these past few months to Members of Congress advocating against the many failed versions of health care reform. Your most recent efforts helped defeat the Senate's latest repeal and reform bill, Graham-Cassidy. This success holds additional significance, as the failure to pass Graham-Cassidy before the September 30, 2017 deadline means any health care reform vote would most likely need at least 60 votes to pass the Senate. Given their difficulty to even achieve a simple majority, this higher threshold brings a moment of relief. While we can be proud of these accomplishments, we must remain vigilant and nimble as Congress continues to look at health care reform.

In addition to health care reform efforts, NASW staff continue to work on securing bipartisan champions in the Senate with the goal to have a Senate companion bill to ***H.R. 1290-Improving Access to Mental Health Act***. Currently, ***H.R.1290, the Improving Access to Mental Health Act*** has **13 cosponsors**. For more information on the bill please visit our website [here](#).

To continue building bipartisan cosponsors for ***H.R. 1484 the Social Worker Safety Act of 2017***, NASW met with our lead House GOP champion and sponsor Congresswoman Elise Stefanik's (R-NY-21) office. We discussed strategy for additional cosponsor outreach and support. NASW needs your continued advocacy to gain more cosponsors to this vital piece of legislation. A full list of current cosponsors for H.R. 1484 can be found [here](#).

NASW continues to push for support for ***H.R. 1289, Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr., Social Work Reinvestment Act***, which currently has **19 cosponsors**.

On August 22, 2017, NASW generated an [advocacy alert](#) urging Congress to increase funding for the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP). On September 5, NASW participated in a Twitter storm organized by the Eldercare Workforce Alliance (EWA) to advocate for GWEP. Two days later, on September 7, the Senate Committee on Appropriations passed a bill providing GWEP with \$38.7 million, which represented level funding from the previous fiscal year. Although this amount was lower than the \$51 million for which NASW and EWA had advocated, it did not include the \$4 million cut proposed by the House. We need you to [Urge Congress to increase funding for the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program \(GWEP\)](#): GWEP is a [federally funded program](#) that enhances the capacity of health professions practitioners and students (including social workers), direct care workers, and family caregivers to care for older adults. In mid-July the House Appropriations Committee voted to reduce GWEP funding in fiscal year 2018 by \$4 million—a 10% cut for a program that is already quite modest. The federal budget has not been finalized, so it is not too late to advocate for GWEP. Send messages to your members of Congress using NASW’s [advocacy alert](#). For additional information, visit the GWEP page of the [Eldercare Workforce Alliance](#), of which NASW is a member.

**New legislation makes hearing aids more affordable and accessible:** The Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act of 2017 (S. 670/H.R. 1652), was signed into law August 18, as part of the Food and Drug Administration Reauthorization Act of 2017 (P.L. 115-52). Under the new law, certain hearing aids for mild to moderate hearing loss will be available over-the-counter and without a prescription. NASW supported the bipartisan bills as a member of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations ([Senate letter](#); [House letter](#)); the coalition’s role in advancing the legislation was highlighted in an article in [Cape Cod Today](#).

**Supporting the Dream Act:** NASW was among several organizations who met with staff of Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) seeking his support for the Dream Act. The group had an unexpected chance to meet with Senator Alexander in-person. The Senator was leaning toward voting for a “clean” Dream Act. However, he was less committed to signing onto the bill as a sponsor. The objective of the group was to obtain bipartisan support and passage of the Dream Act.

On the House side, NASW and other members of the Immigration Taskforce were invited to a planning meeting with House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, and others to collaborate on outreach to members of Congress to maximize bipartisan support of the Dream Act. The meeting was held at the Capitol Visitor Center and Leader Pelosi facilitated the meeting.

**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](#).

### **Administrative Activities**

[NASW provided oral comments at HHS Public Stakeholder Listening Session on Strategies for Improving Parity for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Coverage, 82 FR 30876](#)

As mentioned in the last Washington Update, NASW presented comments on July 27, 2017, at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) *Public Stakeholder Listening Session on Strategies for Improving Parity for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Coverage* (Document 82 FR 30876). Mental health and substance use disorder parity provisions and enforcement have benefited professional social workers, and the communities they serve, by encouraging greater access to behavioral health services. Among its suggested ways to clarify and strengthen parity provisions, NASW

recommends mental health parity standards to provide consistency in how parity is implemented among insurance companies and encourages HHS to eliminate barriers to evidence-based behavioral health interventions.

NASW staff attended a September 14 meeting with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services addressing open enrollment for Medicare beneficiaries.

NASW was among the invitees to attend the White House's public support of drug abuse prevention month. The event was facilitated by the Acting Director of the Office of Drug Control Policy, Richard Baum at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building and included remarks by Assistant to the President and Senior Advisor, Kellyanne Conway.

#### **NASW opposes CMS's proposal to allow predispute arbitration agreements in long-term care facilities:**

In October 2016, in response to [feedback from NASW](#) and [other advocates](#), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) [prohibited long-term care facilities](#) from entering into predispute binding arbitration agreements with facility residents. However, in June 2017 CMS issued a [proposed rule](#) communicating its intent to reverse this ban, even allowing facilities to require residents to sign predispute arbitration agreements as a condition of admission. [Read NASW's comments opposing the Administration's proposal.](#)

#### **Coalition Activities:**

##### *Health Care*

NASW staff participated in weekly calls with the **Families USA- Protect Our Care Coalition** and monthly meetings with the **Medicaid Coalition** to coordinate advocacy efforts to preserve the ACA and Medicaid.

On September 15, NASW staff participated in the Primary Care Organizations Consortium meeting at the American Psychological Association with the focus on Interdisciplinary Training Programs.

##### *Palliative Care*

In June, NASW staff participated in the *National Consensus Project (NCP) Stakeholder Strategic Directions Summit* and a summary report is now available to view and download [online](#). Participants provided input to help define the [scope and direction](#) of the upcoming [4th edition of the NCP Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care](#) that is scheduled for publication in July 2018.

##### *Older Adults*

**Use new issue brief to advocate for Medicaid:** *Preserve Medicaid for Our Nation's Older Adults and Those Who Care for Them*, an [issue brief](#) by the Eldercare Workforce Alliance (EWA), provides key information about the ways in which Medicaid supports both beneficiaries and the eldercare workforce. As a member of EWA, NASW contributed to the development of the issue brief. Learn about EWA's other [policy priorities](#), also developed in collaboration with NASW.

**Learn how to reframe elder abuse as a social justice issue to increase support for effective programs and policies:** The Reframing Elder Abuse Project is a partnership of the [FrameWorks Institute](#) and the federally funded [National Center on Elder Abuse](#) (NCEA). As a member of the [Reframing Elder Abuse Committee](#), NASW participated in a FrameWorks–NCEA Twitter chat in August; [transcript available](#). Other introductory materials: archived version of a September 2017 FrameWorks–NCEA [Webinar](#); August 2017 FrameWorks [blog](#). Detailed information: [Talking Elder Abuse toolkit](#) and [Strengthening the Support MessageMemo](#), both released by FrameWorks in May 2017.

### *Voting Rights*

NASW staff participated in an emergency phone call with the Pence-Kobach Coalition to respond to the *Presidential Commission on Election Integrity*. The commission is also known as the Pence-Kobach (P-K) Election Commission. The national coalition is organized around the premise that voter fraud is essentially non-existent. The P-K Commission is more interested in making recommendations that focused on voter suppression - such as expunging voter rolls - that effect communities of color, college students and older Americans. NASW staff issued action alerts and voting rights updates that educated members about the misrepresentation of the purpose and intent of the P-K Commission.

NASW staff participated in a national “field and communication” strategy call related to the Pence-Kobach Voter Integrity Commission. This call was to discuss and implement messaging, state-level advocacy and dissemination of information about concerns of voter suppression recommendations that may come out of the commission.

### *Immigration*

NASW staff participated in an emergency national call to discuss President Trump’s executive memo that declared an end to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) “Dreamers” program - within six-months - unless Congress passes legislation that the White House deems acceptable. The emergency DACA call was aimed at mobilizing civil rights and immigration rights organizations to urge Congress to pass the Dream Act. NASW is committed to participating in the mobilization by issuing action alerts, providing members with DACA updates, and attending visits to Capitol Hill to urge individual members of Congress to support the Dream Act.

### *Criminal Justice*

NASW staff was invited to attend a Second Chance Act (SCA) Stakeholders meeting with the Council of State Governments (CSG). The purpose of the meeting was to assign leadership roles for outreach to Congress for the reauthorization of SCA. First passed in 2008, this legislation marked the first of its kind for major reentry policy. Its annual funding is now at \$61 million for grants to non-governmental and state/local governments for services including mental health. NASW staff is the lead for SCA reauthorization outreach via Hill visits by mental health groups.

NASW staff met with leaders of the Social Work Grand Challenges *Decarceration* Work Group to discuss and implement a *criminal justice policy sub-group*. The Grand Challenges is a national effort to position

social work as a voice in some of the nation's major issues - criminal justice reform being one of those issues. Social justice staff will co-lead the criminal justice policy sub-group along with Dr. Charles Lewis. The group will develop written policy statements on all aspects of the criminal justice system.

### *Census*

NASW staff participated in the monthly Census Stakeholder Task Force meeting that is organized by the Leadership Conference for Civil and Human Rights (LCCR). The Taskforce is comprised of diverse groups whose interest is to ensure that historically undercounted populations are included in the 2020 census- including communities of color, immigrant communities, the homeless, incarcerated individuals, and other marginalized groups.

### *Drug Policy*

NASW staff serves as the co-chair of the Justice Roundtable's Drug Policy Working Group. The action items of the latest meeting include; planning opposition to the nomination of Rep. Marino (R-PA) to become the director of the White House's Office of Drug Control Policy (ONDCP); planning support for drug policy legislation that emphasize decriminalization; and use of a public health approach to drug use.

NASW participated in coalition work with:

- Leadership Council of Aging Organizations
- 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
- Eldercare Workforce Alliance
- Gerontological Society of America
- Leadership Council of Aging Organizations
- National Center on Elder Abuse
- Center for Excellence in Assisted Living
- Center for Medicare Advocacy

### **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 recent letters is listed below.

- [NASW signs on to Leadership Council of Aging Organizations letter urging the Senate to reject the Graham–Cassidy health care bill \(09/25/2017\)](#)

- [NASW signs on to Coalition to Preserve Rehabilitation letter urging the Senate to reject the Graham–Cassidy health care bill \(09/22/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to Coalition to Preserve Rehabilitation letter urging CMS to withdraw the proposed rule for home health payments \(09/22/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to Leadership Council of Aging Organizations letters to the House and the Senate advocating for health extenders that affect older adults \(09/14/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs onto letter to HHS Secretary Price urging him to assure and maintain access to medications under Medicare Part D’s protected classes policy \(9/8/2017\)](#)
- [NASW joins children’s organizations to advocate for Children’s Health Insurance Program Extension \(9/6/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs onto letter to support full, clean extension of funding for the Children’s Health Insurance Program \(CHIP\) \(9/5/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to open letter urging the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to reject approve an amendment to Iowa’s Wellness Plan 1115 Demonstration that would eliminate three-month retroactive coverage for Medicaid beneficiaries \(09/05/2017\)](#)
- [NASW joins BHIT Coalition in thanking Senators Whitehouse and Portman for introducing the Improving Access to Behavioral Health Information Technology Act \(S. 1732\) \(08/04/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to open letter urging the U.S. Department of Labor to proceed with timely implementation of the Fiduciary Rule \(07/21/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to Leadership Council of Aging Organizations letter urging Senate and House appropriators to prioritize funding for the Older Americans Act and other aging-focused programs in fiscal year 2018 \(06/30/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to open letter urging the U.S. Department of Labor to reevaluate the Senior Community Service Employment Program \(SCSEP\) \(06/30/2017\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to open letter opposing the Better Care Reconciliation Act and the American Health Care Act on behalf of older adults living with HIV \(06/27/2017\)](#)

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

- [NASW signs Joint Letter Seeking Funding for the Mental Health Care Provider Education in HIV/AIDS Program \(Aug. 22, 2017\)](#)
- [NASW Response to Proposed Rule: CMS-5522-P, 2018 Proposed Program Updates to the Quality Payment Program \(Aug. 21, 2017\)](#)

- [NASW opposes CMS's proposal to allow predispute arbitration agreements in long-term care facilities \(Aug. 2, 2017\)](#)
- [NASW provides oral comments at HHS Public Stakeholder Listening Session on Strategies for Improving Parity for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Coverage, 82 FR 30876 \(July 27, 2017\)](#)