



NASW

National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

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Email Letter

May 1, 2020

The Honorable Ned Lamont
Governor, State of Connecticut
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

**Social Workers are Essential to Reopening Connecticut:
An Open Letter to Governor Ned Lamont**

Dear Governor Lamont:

As of April 30, 2020, over 97,000 Connecticut residents have been tested for the coronavirus or COVID-19. Nearly 30% of those tested had laboratory-confirmed cases and 8% of COVID-19 laboratory-confirmed cases have resulted in a resident's death. During this global COVID-19 pandemic, the National Association of Social Workers, Connecticut Chapter (NASW/CT), thanks you and your administration for your swift and ongoing COVID-19 response and actions dating back to the beginning of March 2020. COVID-19 has not only compromised the physical and economic well-being of our state but negatively affected the mental and behavioral health of our residents, most especially the elderly, people of color, and those of low socioeconomic status — resulting in an unprecedented circumstance not seen in our lifetime.

COVID-19's detrimental effects to vulnerable individuals and communities will affect Connecticut long into the uncertain future, necessitating the need for the social work profession, a profession birthed out of the need to address and alleviate complex social problems and injustices, to be part of any treatment or reopening plan. **NASW/CT writes to you today to urge you to appoint a Committee addressing Social Services and Mental/Behavioral Health that features the voices and input of social workers to the Reopen Connecticut Advisory Group.**

The bevy of challenges COVID-19 has placed on Connecticut residents reach beyond health care, epidemiology, or business concerns. For instance, there has been a drastic increase in mental health needs and treatment by our clients and communities during this pandemic. We foresee that these needs for social services and trauma therapy will only increase as time goes by and as individuals struggle to cope with anxiety, depression, and grief. Although the latest data is not out yet, we know that barriers to mental health treatment, decreased access to community supports, social isolation, derailed education, and economic stress will result in a high number of suicides. Amidst the Great Depression, the U.S. suicide rate rose to a record high of 21.9 deaths per 100,000 persons and the U.S. and Europe recorded over 10,000 additional suicides after the last recession.

Social workers are often at the frontlines of the pandemic, serving as clinicians or counselors in hospitals, housing advocates, drug recovery specialists, interventionists, and as union leaders for members who are struggling to maintain employment. Social workers are exposed to the realities of people's struggles, hopes, goals, and limitations on a micro field level and specialize in the macro level implications of prolonged exposure to unstable environments, especially during disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, it is the social work profession that takes particular care in advocating for our most vulnerable populations and provides service through social, cultural, and economic justice lenses. These are only a few examples of why social workers are so essential to our state and need to be a part of any plan concerning the future health and service of Connecticut and its residents.

COVID-19 has presented the state with the opportunity to reopen and rebuild a stronger, more inclusive, and more stable Connecticut. The social work profession is led by a Code of Ethics designed to develop and implement frameworks focused on community development approaches to social crises. Social workers have the skills and knowledge base to not only address present safety concerns but the long-term effects of shock, fear, trauma, and loss. The social work profession performs this on an individual and a familial level as well as through systems-wide change.

Again, NASW/CT thanks you and your administration for treating COVID-19 seriously and putting the well-being of Connecticut residents first by adhering to evidence-based global health recommendations. As Connecticut moves forward and plans to reopen appropriately, any plan designed to treat the shocking aftereffects of a global pandemic on a state's communities needs to include a profession whose mission and history are based on helping people in an ethical and empathetic manner.

NASW/CT would like you to consider appointing a Social Services and Mental/Behavioral Health Committee that includes the voices and input of social workers to the Reopen Connecticut Advisory Group.

I look forward to receiving your response to this letter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at skarp.naswct@socialworkers.org. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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