**National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter**

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**2019 Legislative Agenda**

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Connecticut Chapter priorities are designed to make progress toward the NASW 2016 Grand Challenges of tackling our nation's toughest social problems. Such challenges include: Ensuring healthy development of all youth; Closing the health gap; Ending family violence; Advancing long and productive lives; Eradicating social isolation; Ending homelessness; Creating social responses to a changing environment; Harnessing technology for social good; Promoting smart decarceration; Building financial capability for all; Reducing extreme economic inequality; and Achieving equal opportunity and Justice. Additionally, in 2016 NASW national board established 5 social justice and human rights priorities and 4 sub priorities. The 5 priorities are: voting rights, criminal justice juvenile justice, Immigration reform and economic justice/equity and the four sub priorities are health and behavioral health parity, racial and population -based discrimination and, judiciary/Supreme Court nominations, and environmental justice.

The Education for Legislative Action Network (ELAN) committee CT Chapter refers to, and bases the main objectives of our work off of the above National goals. Specific to Connecticut, ELAN CT (henceforth is referred to as NASW/CT as ELAN CT is its sub-committee) pledges in 2019 to introduce legislation in areas where we are uniquely positions to do so such as title protection, social work safety, and increasing social work positions. NASW/CT will actively support legislation filed in 2019 that meets our approved priorities in coordination with CT advocacy coalitions (when appropriate). NASW/CT will initiate legislation in cooperation with CT legislators, particularly social workers legislators and NASW/CT members.

In 2019, NASW/CT will continue to monitor the CT state budget to ensure it maintains core safety net services and increases funding social services as appropriate. In addition, NASW/CT in 2019 is committed the education of our members, ourselves as a committee, the public and state legislators on issues covered by our nationally-approved social work priorities. Such includes supporting NASW in promoting specific federal legislation and opposing defunding or cuts in safety net programs by the US Senate and House of Representatives. We are committed to maximizing our collaboration with chapters in other states to share legislative successes and model legislation in every state, and supporting the National legislative agenda. NASW/CT also agrees to use the Coalition Advocacy model NASW recommends. This entails joining and collaborating with state wide coalitions that have emerged from common concerns, including the NASW 12 Grand Challenges and our social justice priorities and sub priorities.

**All Encompassing Proposed Legislative Goals and Priorities for NASW/CT this Legislative Session are as follows:**

**A1. Proposing Legislation within the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA):**

The main focus of ELAN CT, in conjunction with NASW/CT, will be to implement Title Protection for BSW, MSW, and PhD’s in Social work or DSW’s in the 2019 legislative session. NASW/CT strongly recommends Connecticut protect our vulnerable consumers from receiving sub-standard services by enacting a title protection law to ensure only properly trained social workers are hired into social work positions. NASW/CT supports statutory title protection to the job title of “Social Worker” or any job title that includes the words “Social Worker” solely to professionals who hold a BSW or MSW degree from a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited program or a PhD in Social Work or DSW. Thirty-eight states have title protection for the job classification of social workers, including our neighboring states: Massachusetts, Vermont, Maine, and New Jersey. Several other states, including Rhode Island, are working toward such recognition. Our action plan includes:

1-Title Protection lobby plan

2-Education of legislators and community

3-Leglslative passage plan

**A2. Proposed legislation that might be introduced in working with NASW/CT committees or other collaborating groups:**

NASW/CT will work to propose additional legislation within NASW/CT itself or with our coalitions involved in advocacy work. Such proposed legislation includes:

1- Bill requiring CT schools to employ social workers in the CT schools.

2- Reintroduce a social work staffing bill from 2016 that requires a ratio of social workers to patients in CT nursing homes.

3- Bills related to increasing voter engagement and reducing barriers to voting.

4-Social work safety bill

**B. Working with NASW National on Federal Legislation:**

NASW/CT will work with National to activate members to act on Action Alerts from National and build relationships with CT US representatives and senators on national issues. The legislation currently identified for support are: Medicare Reimbursement, Affordable Care Act Integration, Student Loan Forgiveness, Social Work Reinvestment Act, Older American Act, Child Welfare, Mental Health, the Social Work Safety Act and Social Work Advocacy. We hope to encourage the coordination of other legislative committees in the other states as part of the NASW Chapter Legislative Leadership Group and working with the advocacy and legislative staff of NASW in Washington DC.

**C. NASW/CT Professional Guild, Education, & Research Issues for 2019:**

Professional guild goals to be focused on in 2019 are the role of social workers in the community and working with legislators to understand our impact, need for title protection, and increasing the number of social workers employed in CT. NASW/CT will work to connect legislators to relevant social work research on issues before them. A goal of NASW/CT this legislative session is to connect and build an informal caucus among all current social work legislators (seven in total).

NASW/CT will continue to engage with the CT social work universities and strive to better engage professors and students to lobby and inform CT state Senators and Representatives.

**D. NASW/CT Public Funding and Revenue Goals:**

1- NASW/CT holds the position that every Connecticut resident and family should be able to meet their basic human needs. We jointly oppose cuts to safety net programs that serve Connecticut's most vulnerable populations and support proposals that prevent individuals and families from falling into poverty with little to no, or inadequate resources to self-sufficiency.

2- NASW/CT are focused on maintaining safety net services, employment, mental health and substance abuse programs, or preventions programs. Increased revenue or reallocation of resources advocated for may include: voluntary tax contribution for additional mental health service funding or offering a vanity plate ("CT Cares"), tax reform that balances the amount of taxes paid by the state's poorest and wealthiest, "sunsetting" of various tax breaks, reinstituting the luxury tax, re-configuring tobacco tax or revenue from casinos to mental health and addiction services, reallocating funds from incarceration to decarceration, taxes on opioid drug companies used for substance abuse treatment, promoting an equitable formula for state school funding, and regionalization of public services.

**ELAN CT & NASW/CT Supported Legislation**

ELAN CT & NASW/CT’s work on specific bills using the coalition advocacy model include, but are not limited to:

* Paid Family Leave and Medical Leave
* Pay Equity
* Increase minimum wage to living wage
* Sexual Harassment Training and Protections
* Full funding of Care4Kids
* CT renewable energy to 100% by 2050
* Fully funded and equitably founded system of public education
* Protect and expand Medicaid program
* Lower prescription drug prices
* Ensure access to dental care for low income individuals
* Ensure continuation for citizens Election Program
* Tuition free/Debt Free community college
* Expand CT Second Chance Program
* Bail reform
* Bills related to ending the school to prison pipeline
* Ensure funding and expansion of early intervention programs and School Based Health Clinics.
* Provide mental health, trauma and mental health first aid training of teachers, administrators, and other school staff to create and promote emotionally safe classrooms.
* Mental Health Parity in insurance
* Coordinating funding across child serving systems
* Reproductive health services
* Improvement in services for citizens struggling with opioid addiction
* Inclusive language for LGBTQIA community
* Broaden rights of all adoptees to have access to original birth certificate
* Voting Reforms
* Support adequate provider rates for private practice
* Increase access to emergency housing and efforts to provide long term affordable housing
* Support of rapid rehousing and coordinated access networks
* End human trafficking and childhood marriage in CT
* Support of legislation focusing on increased resources the DACA and immigrant families.
* Support of legislation that limits ICE from detaining immigrants and support of CT sanctuary cities.
* Access to social work, mental health and medical services, and holistic services provided in the home for all ages.
* Maintain and increase access to food and proper nutrition
* Gun violence prevention and school safety
* Criminal sentencing reform
* Integration of services crisis teams, police, courts shelters hospitals and community based mental health and social work services
* Decarceration and jail diversion with use of risk assessments and proactive reentry services
* Use of Medicaid funds to increase improve services such as case management, transportation and improved medical and mental health service provision and client empowerment
* Increase time allowed to report rape or sexual abuse in CT
* Increase coordination of community and veteran services in CT
* Expanding the right to vote for people currently incarcerated.
* Progressive revenue streams
* Adequately fund community based mental health services