

2012 Legislative Agenda

The National Association of Social Work (NASW) is the world's largest organization of professional social workers. The Minnesota Chapter [NASW-MN] is committed to working within the legislative arena to promote policies and legislation that support professional regulation of social work practice, enhance the lives of people we serve, and promote equal opportunities to all Minnesota residents. The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. The profession does not condone, facilitate, or collaborate with discrimination of any form, including ethnicity, national origin, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political affiliation, religion, or mental, physical or developmental disability. NASW-MN promotes awareness, education and political advocacy within a range of concerns including health care, mental health, civil rights, child welfare, tax policy and economic security, to enhance the social functioning of individuals, families and communities. During the 2012 Legislative Session, NASW-MN will continue to:

- Track legislation
- Advocate for social policy reform or policy maintenance
- Work with identified coalition partners
- Meet with key legislative leaders
- Organize Social Work Day at the Capitol
- Communicate with NASW-MN members via 'action alerts' and technical assistance

Legislative Priorities for 2012

1. Defeat The Anti-Marriage Constitutional Amendment
2. Protect the Minnesota Board of Social Work
3. Defeat Tax limiting constitutional amendments that would cripple the ability to provide human services
4. Encourage voting by keeping processes in place that don't require a picture ID

Legislative Positions

Civil Rights

NASW-MN supports civil rights for all people. NASW-MN opposes public policies that discriminate against people by race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability and continues to oppose, any constitutional amendments that would ban gay marriage. In addition, NASW-MN supports an equitable social welfare policy that does not discriminate against status as a citizen, refugee or documented/un-documented immigrant. We would also support all eligible citizens' right to vote regardless of being in possession of a photo ID.

Professional Regulation

NASW-MN supports legal regulation of social work practice that is effective in protecting the public and respects the financial and practice realities of social workers in Minnesota. We therefore believe that licensing fees should be kept as low as possible without impairing the mission of the Board of Social Work. We also support the negotiation of a mutually acceptable elimination of the City-County-State exemption from the social work licensing law.

Tax and Fiscal Policy

NASW-MN believes that there must be sufficient revenue to pay for basic human services; and that inflation should be a factor in determining the state's economic forecast of both revenue and expense calculations. NASW-MN believes that the solutions to the state of Minnesota budget challenges must not focus merely on funding cuts and deferring responsibilities to the counties, cities and other local entities. When current revenue streams do not provide for those services, then state revenue should also be increased to meet the state's responsibility. We will support tax credits and other tax policies that support low income families. NASW-MN also believes that tax policy should be based on a progressive system.

Economic Security

The U.S. and Minnesota economy is at an extremely critical juncture. Economic security is of paramount importance for more and more people. Accordingly, NASW-MN re-emphasizes its advocacy for a social support system that provides an adequately resourced safety net and creates opportunities for Minnesota families to move out of poverty and achieve economic self-sufficiency. A comprehensive economic security system for all community members promotes work with a living wage and includes a network of supports that enable access to employment through both job training and retraining, safe and affordable housing (including prevention of homelessness), sufficient and nutritious food, accessible and affordable health care, quality child care and other basic needs that support Minnesota families' physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Health Care

NASW-MN believes health care and dental coverage should be universal, affordable, accessible and comprehensive. NASW-MN supports policies that move toward universal coverage, including prescription drug coverage and the expansion of public health and preventative services. NASW-MN supports the adoption of the Minnesota Health Care Act, which replaces the current insurance/HMO payment model with a single payer, universal coverage system. NASW-MN urges prompt "opt-in" to the early Federal Medicaid expansion opportunity.

Mental Health

NASW-MN will work to promote full parity within the health care system for mental health, behavioral health and substance abuse prevention and treatment. NASW-MN believes that all mental health professionals need to be fairly and equitably compensated to ensure that public clients have access to appropriate mental health services, including services provided by licensed social workers. NASW-MN supports children's mental health collaborations. NASW-MN supports increasing state responsibility in the funding of mental health services.

Child Welfare

NASW-MN believes that every child deserves to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment. We support a strong child welfare system that invests in early childhood education as well as effective child abuse and neglect prevention and intervention programs. NASW-MN urges the state of Minnesota to address the impact of the extensive federal cuts in funding in child welfare services. NASW-MN also supports public policy that would lead to ending racial disparities within the child welfare system. NASW-MN supports more state-level fiscal responsibility in addressing child welfare, including the reduction of client case-loads. NASW-MN also advocates for increased funding for MN crisis nurseries through a specific budget line item.