

NASW would like to provide our members with clarification about the comments and opposition by the Center for Clinical Social Worker's regarding a piece of federal legislation introduced by NASW this session. Please read the comments from our national office Executive Director, Dr. Betsy Clark.

Thank you for your comments about the *Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act*. This legislation is one piece of the overall Social Work Reinvestment Initiative (SWRI) which is explained in more detail at www.socialworkreinvestment.org

Social Work Reinvestment Act is inclusive of All Professional Social Workers

The *Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act* was crafted by professional social workers and legislators. It is a commitment to ensure that the communities, groups, and individuals we serve can continue to receive essential care and resources for years to come. The legislation was based on data that proved that social workers struggle with incomparable salaries, insurmountable education debt, and serious safety concerns. The challenges are preventing the profession from attracting young social workers and retaining experienced social workers. At a time in our history when social work services are proving more necessary than ever, this is a daunting outlook.

The Social Work Reinvestment Act is aimed at improving the profession for all social workers.

The bill has several components:

1) The legislation was intentionally drafted as a broad bill to be as inclusive as possible. Findings exhibit the current state of the profession and outlook for the future. There are proven shortages currently in child welfare and aging. The areas that were chosen for the findings are not aimed at illustrating specific social work practice specialties, but rather major areas in which a social work workforce shortage will have serious impact. For instance, social workers are highlighted in the bill as the largest group of mental health providers in the country, and because 26 percent of American adults experience a diagnosable mental health disorder, reinvestment in the profession is crucial.

2) A Social Work Reinvestment Commission will provide a comprehensive analysis of current trends within the professional and academic social work communities and will develop long-term recommendations and strategies to maximize the ability of America's social workers to serve their clients with expertise and care. This key component of the bill will address all areas of social work including fair market compensation, high educational debt, social work workforce trends, knowledge development, social worker safety, and state level social work licensure as well as the impact that these challenges have on the areas of aging, child welfare, military and veterans affairs, mental and behavioral health and disability, criminal justice, and health.

3) Demonstration Programs will provide competitive grants in the areas of workplace improvements, research, education and training, and community based programs of excellence. These grants do not stipulate one type of social worker and are open to social work education programs, community agencies, post doctoral social workers, and private and public agencies. These programs were the best possible approach to determining what workforce challenges currently exist and what steps can be taken to remediate them.

Broader Social Work Reinvestment Initiative Continues to Benefit Clinical Social Workers

In addition to the Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act, NASW along with the Action Network for Social Work Education and Research (ANSWER Coalition <http://www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/answer/default.asp>) is coordinating efforts under the broader Social Work Reinvestment Initiative to recruit, retain, and reinvest in the profession. This includes S.1212, the *Clinical Social Work Medicare Equity Act* which Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) introduced. This legislation primarily benefits clinical social workers and NASW has consistently advocated for this and other bills that would provide comprehensive benefits for the full profession.

Another key component of the SWRI is 56 Chapter plans across the nation. These plans reflect state level workforce issues including title protection, public and private reimbursement, loan forgiveness, and scope of practice. State plans can be found at <http://www.socialworkreinvestment.org/State/>

We have deep appreciation for the valuable work and contributions of clinical social workers. During the crafting of this legislation, the intention was to create the most comprehensive analysis of professional social work as possible. There have not been significant efforts in the past to ensure a robust social work workforce, and the *Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act* is the first of many steps to ensure that the profession will continue to thrive for years to come. The legislation in the House currently has 51 cosponsors, because of an unprecedented 12,000 letters sent to Congress from NASW members. Senator Mikulski (D-MD) introduced S.2858 on World Social Work Day, April 15, 2008, as well. I hope that you can support the legislation and work with NASW to ensure that the needs of all social workers are being met.