The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the world’s largest organization of professional social workers, with almost 2,000 members in Minnesota, and over 120,000 members nationwide. 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, or living in poverty. During the Legislative Session, NASW-MN works with coalition partners and members to advocate for legislation which aligns with our agenda and professional values and ethics, communicates with NASW-MN members about policy issues, and organizes Social Work Day at the Capitol.

2019 Priorities
1. NASW-MN advocates for policies to ensure full parity within the health care system for mental health, behavioral health, and substance abuse treatment.
2. NASW-MN advocates for policies to eliminate racial disparities in social services, educational systems, child welfare, policing and criminal justice systems, social welfare programs, and all city, county and state institutions.
3. NASW-MN advocates for policies to address the affordable housing crisis.

Position Statements
In addition to the above priorities for the 2019 Legislative Session, NASW-MN promotes awareness, education and political advocacy in the following areas:

Child Welfare
NASW-MN advocates for policies which support every child growing up in a nurturing and safe environment and society. We support:
- A strong child welfare system that invests in early childhood education.
- Effective prevention and intervention programs for child abuse and neglect.
- More state-level fiscal responsibility in addressing child welfare and adequate funding for child welfare services for sufficient staff and to reduce caseloads.
- Public policy to end racial disparities within the child welfare system.
- Increased access to quality early learning programs for 0-4 year-olds.

Civil Rights
NASW-MN advocates for state and legal systems to recognize, support, and enact policies to protect the civil rights of all people. We support:
- Opposition to 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 status.
- Upon release into the community, individuals with a past felony will have the right to vote.

Economic Security
NASW-MN advocates for the social rights of all people. As equally morally worthy people, everyone in a democracy deserves state support to avoid abject poverty. In addition to economic supports, this includes supports to move into living wage work. To be truly free in a democracy includes freedom from poverty. We support:
- An adequately resourced safety net which includes ongoing cost of living adjustments to meet needs in a changing economy.
- Opportunities for families to move out of poverty and achieve economic self-sufficiency.
- A living wage and access to employment through both job training and retraining.
- Safe and affordable housing (including prevention of homelessness).
- Sufficient and nutritious food.
- Quality child care, education, and post-secondary options.
- Equitable social welfare policy that does not discriminate against status as a citizen, refugee, or documented/un-documented immigrant.

Health Care
NASW-MN advocates for the integrity of a person’s body as central to civil rights, and the ability to access quality health care as a social right. We support:
- Health care and dental coverage that is universal, affordable, accessible and comprehensive.
- Policies that move toward universal coverage, including prescription drug coverage.
- The expansion of public health and preventative services.
- Statewide intervention to address treatment options for opioid abuse, and we oppose the overuse of opioids for pain management.

Mental Health
NASW-MN advocates for the integrity of a person’s mental health as central to civil rights, and the ability to access quality mental health care as a social right. We support:
- Full parity within the health care system for mental health, behavioral health, and substance abuse treatment.
- Fair and equitable compensation for mental health professionals, to ensure that public clients have access to appropriate mental health services, including services provided by licensed social workers.
- Increased funding for mental health services, specifically to increase the capacity of community mental health services and transitional housing to reduce chronic homelessness.
- Increased recruitment and retention of mental health professionals from diverse communities through access to affordable supervision, increased reimbursement rates, and relief from student loan burden.
- Protection of LGBTQ adolescents and adults from sexual orientation change efforts (also referred to as “conversion therapy” or “reparative therapy”).

Professional Regulation
NASW-MN advocates for trained and licensed social workers as professionals who possess the assessment and intervention skills needed in order to achieve the best outcomes for vulnerable adults and children. We Support:
- Legal regulation of social work practice to protect the public and respect the financial and practice realities of social workers in Minnesota.
- Legislation which guarantees that all new employees of any agency charged with protecting Minnesota’s most vulnerable populations are licensed as social workers.
- Elimination of the County exemption from the social work licensing law.
- Low licensing fees without impairing the mission of the Board of Social Work.
- Leadership and policies that support ethical expectations of mental health clinicians, helping ensure caseloads are manageable and clinicians stay within their scope of practice.
- Enhancement of Social Work as a profession.
- Efforts to ensure Duty to Warn protection for social work interns.

Tax and Fiscal Policy
NASW-MN advocates for social responsibility. A democracy can only function if the benefits and burdens of society are justly distributed. As moral documents, public budgets should derive from just collection and distribution policies. Public budgets should be allocated in a way to help create just conditions. We Support:
- Sufficient revenue to pay for basic human services.
- Solutions to the state of Minnesota budget challenges that do not focus merely on funding cuts and deferring responsibilities to the counties, cities, and other local entities.
- Tax credits and other tax policies that support low income families and are based on a progressive system.