

**Support for HB 453 P.N. 532**

The National Association of Social Workers, PA Chapter (NASW-PA) supports House Bill 453, and commends Representative David Hickernell for introducing this legislation. The bill will establish the Fostering Independence Through Education Act.

The passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 guaranteed all children a free education, the right to due process, and individualization of instruction according to need. Subsequent reenactments of this legislation have broadened the coverage to include the educational needs of children ages three to 21 years of age.

Foster care and adoption have long served as society's way of providing alternative care to children who—on either a temporary or a permanent basis and for a variety of reasons—cannot live with their families of origin. Unfortunately, the adoption and foster systems are not always effective in providing children the opportunities to grow and mature into functional citizens.

The transition from foster care to independent living poses difficulties for individuals. Studies have shown that education is a significant factor in determining a successful transition. It is in the spirit of education and foster care legislation that HB 453 addresses the plight of the transitioning youth.

NASW-PA believes that supporting individuals in their aspirations to attend a post-secondary educational institution benefits the individual and the community. House Bill 453 provides financial assistance, reduces the long-term costs of the taxpayers, assists youth who are in substitute care and encourages adoption from substitute care by assisting families with financing postsecondary education.

*The National Association of Social Workers is the largest membership organization for professional social workers, serving 150,000. In Pennsylvania alone, NASW-PA represents nearly 6,000 members and works to enhance the professional growth and development of social workers, to create and maintain social work standards, and to advance sound social policies.*