EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

A Year of Accomplishments

The year of 2019 has been called many things: the year of the woman, the year of the advocate, but I’m convinced it was the year of the social worker. Our work in 2019 was framed by the year’s Social Work Month theme: Elevate Social Work. We took this call to action to heart, leading to significant advocacy accomplishments, innovative continuing education programming, and new ways to celebrate and honor you, our members.

Our advocacy accomplishments in 2019 spanned legislative victories, budget wins, and successful activism with the state’s social work licensing board. Working successfully with our coalition partners and legislative allies, three important bills were signed into law, complemented by three wins in the state budget. With the licensing board, we showed up with our members and allied organizations and successfully advocated for change to recent rulings that made it difficult for LCSWs to advance to the LICSW level of licensure.

One of my favorite activities of 2019 was our Social Work Month Exhibit. For a week in March we had 50 of our members on display in the State House. We celebrated these individuals at a reception with their legislators. More than 20 legislators stopped by to show their bipartisan support and appreciation for social workers.

Looking to 2020, I cannot wait to continue the meaningful work we do, together. It will be an important year for collective action and activism, especially politically. For that reason, I urge you to join our Political Action for Candidate Election (PACE) Committee. Our voices together in unison demonstrate the strength and importance of social work. Please be in touch for ways to get involved.

Onward,

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During Social Work Month in March, five social work billboards were on display in Pittsfield, MA
Advocacy Accomplishments

LGBTQ Conversion Therapy Banned
In April, Massachusetts became the 16th state/US territory to ban conversion therapy for minors. Conversion therapy is a harmful, abusive practice with no medical ground and we are proud it is no longer allowed in the Commonwealth.

Cap on Kids Lifted
Also in April, the Massachusetts legislature voted to override a veto from Governor Baker, effectively repealing our state’s family welfare cap. This move helps thousands of vulnerable children across the Commonwealth and their families get the financial support they deserve and need to thrive.

Ghost Networks Eliminated
In November, a bill to eliminate “Ghost Networks” was signed into law as part of the Child Health and Wellness bill. This portion of the bill requires insurance companies to maintain accurate and accessible provider directories for health plans, which will increase access to mental health treatment for consumers and improve social workers’ ability to become empaneled with different insurance companies.

Budget Wins
In the state’s Fiscal Year 2020 budget we worked in coalitions and independently to:

- **Limit Clawbacks:** This law written into the Fiscal Year 2020 budget prohibits retroactive claim denials (also known as “clawbacks”) for behavioral health insurance claims more than 12 months after submission.

- **Close the SNAP Gap:** The “SNAP Gap” refers to the more than 700,000 people who are enrolled in MassHealth and likely eligible for SNAP (food assistance), but are not receiving these benefits. This allocated $1M to establish a pilot for a common application that would allow residents to apply for SNAP when applying for or renewing MassHealth or Medicare Savings Program benefits.

- **Expand Older Adult Behavioral Health Services:** We successfully advocated to increase funding for comprehensive services for behavioral health by an additional $300,000, bringing funding to $800,000.
Membership

Honoring Social Workers

During Social Work Month in March, we hosted two events designed to honor and celebrate our members. At the State House, we curated a visual display of our members to demonstrate the diversity and importance of the profession. A subsequent reception welcomed those featured to the State House for a short speaking program and to meet and be recognized by their legislators. At our 2019 annual awards event, we honored Bet MacArthur (Lifetime Achievement Award), Levin Schwartz (Greatest Contribution to Social Work Practice), Nazda Alam (Beverly Ross Fliegel Greatest Contribution to Social Policy and Change Award), Carla Monteiro (Future of Social Work Award), Ivys Fernández-Pastrana (Public Citizen of the Year Award), and the ACLU of Massachusetts (Advocate of the Year Award).

Creating Shared Racial Justice Language

In October, NASW-MA’s Racial Justice Council celebrated its one-year anniversary by releasing a set of terms and definitions designed to create shared language to advance this crucial work. You can access the terms and definitions here: naswma.org/racialjusticecouncil.

Graduating the Next Generation

NASW-MA began offering a new student member benefit: graduation cords. The Chapter sent teal cords to graduating social work student members to wear on their graduation days. This powerful visual helps to articulate the power of NASW-MA membership and gives student members a sense of belonging.

Licensing Board Advocacy

After hearing frustrations from many social workers, especially those who work for the Department of Children and Families (DCF), about not being able to sit for the LICSW exam because of work deemed not “clinical enough,” we showed up to the Social Work Licensing Board meeting in full force with our members and allied organizations and successfully advocated for change.
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Social Work Month 2020
Social Work Month in March is a time to celebrate the great profession of social work. The theme for Social Work Month 2020 is Social Workers: Generations Strong. The theme has various meanings. As we enter a new decade it is important to look back and honor the powerful, positive impact the social work profession has had on our society for generations. We also want to spotlight the life-affirming work that social workers from all generations—from the Greatest Generation to Generation Z—are doing. And since NASW is celebrating its 65th anniversary in 2020, Social Work Month is a great opportunity to remind social workers of the important work NASW has been doing for decades and the need to join.

Continuing Education
Shame, Longing, and Courage in Psychotherapy
In May, we brought Dr. Anne Hallward, host and founder of Safe Space Radio, to re-examine therapy as a relationship to foster and incubate courage.

Into the Weeds: Marijuana Legalization and Social Work Practice
In September, we hosted a day-long conference to explore how marijuana legalization is currently impacting and will impact social work practice. We heard directly from Commissioners on the Cannabis Control Commission, the body responsible for implementing marijuana policies, as well as leading social work experts.

Legislative Education and Advocacy Day
In March, we welcomed more than 650 social work students and newer professionals to Faneuil Hall and the State House for our annual Legislative Education and Advocacy Day (LEAD). This hallmark event is one of the largest advocacy days in the State House each year and is always an impressive demonstration of the power of social work.