

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

# An Unprecedented Year

If 2020 proved anything, it is that social workers are essential. I am in immense awe and filled with gratitude for you and the life-saving and life-enhancing work you do every day, even in the face of extreme

adversity. Your resilience, grit, and grace is the glue that holds our society together.

As a nation, we spent much of last year navigating the COVID-19 pandemic, a call to end police violence and advance racial justice, and a tumultuous presidential election. In each instance you were there, providing care and advocating for systems change.

As a profession and organization, we also spent much of last year looking inward at how social work and NASW as a whole has perpetuated white supremacy and caused

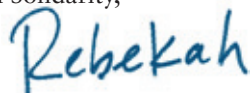
undue harm, both to clients and communities of color but also to our BIPOC-identifying colleagues. Thank you for holding us accountable and learning, growing, and leaning in with us and we worked, and will continue to work, to dismantle systems of oppression within our own field.

**While racial justice has always been a part of our work at NASW-MA, especially over the last few years, it took new precedence in 2020.** Thanks to work that began prior to 2020 in collaboration with our Racial Justice Council, we released statements about xenophobia and racism, finalized a new tool to screen all of our priority legislation for its racial justice impact, reviewed our internal policies to ensure that NASW-MA is an equitable and just place to work, and offered training to our staff, board, and other volunteer Chapter leaders. We joined the Massachusetts Public Health Association's Coronavirus and Equity Task Force and advocated for several pieces of emergency legislation that worked to remove systemic and racist barriers to care and resources needed to navigate the pandemic. We offered you new written and virtual continuing education programming and events. We also helped launch a racial injustice working group across NASW chapters and one of our staff was named to National's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to help move the entire Association forward.

We closed out 2020 by launching a new strategic plan that will help us navigate the rest of the pandemic and its immediate aftermath, including holding us accountable to our continued commitment to be a just organization and to fight for a society garnered by these tenets.

Thank you for your membership.

In Solidarity,



Rebekah Gewirtz, MPA, Executive Director

## By the Numbers

In 2020, we:

- Gave out 150 graduation cords to graduating social work students and faculty
- Hosted over 30 continuing education webinars, each worth 1.5 CEUs
- Celebrated staffer Adam Linn's 20 year anniversary with NASW-MA
- Highlighted 15 members through our new Member Spotlight social media campaign
- Endorsed 11 candidates in the general election through our political arm PACE, 8 of whom won
- Published 8 statements, op-eds, and letters to the editor in major statewide publications
- Discussed 5 books through our Central, Northeast, and Social Workers for Racial Justice book clubs



Deb Goldfarb, Co-chair of NASW-MA's Criminal Justice Committee at a rally over the summer with members of NASW-MA's Criminal Justice Committee: Brandy Henry (Co-chair), Carla Monteiro, and Sarah Coughlin (Board President)



Jamie Klufts, Director of Communications & Strategic Initiatives, campaigns with member Sophie Hansen in support of PACE-endorsed candidate State Representative Tram Nguyen (D-Andover)

## Legislative Advocacy Accomplishments



Director of Communications & Strategic Initiatives Jamie Klufts, member Debby Beck, and Executive Director Rebekah Gewirtz attend an advocacy day in February to Lift Kids Out of Deep Poverty

- Expanded Voting Options:** In July, we recognized the threat COVID-19 placed on the most consequential election of our lifetimes and fought to expand the availability of mail-in ballots and early voting for Massachusetts voters. As a result, we saw a record-setting number of ballots cast in the general election, more than two million of which were placed by mail, drop box, or through early voting.
- Passed Police Reform Legislation:** In December, after many months in conference committee, Governor Baker signed important police accountability and racial justice legislation. We advocated for provisions to limit qualified immunity, ban the use of chokeholds, limit the use of no-knock warrants, and make school resource officers optional, all of which were included in the final bill. One of the main outcomes of this legislation will be the creation of the Massachusetts Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission (POST) to standardize the certification, training, and decertification of police officers. One of the 9 Commission members will be a social worker identified by NASW-MA.
- Expanded Access to Abortion Care:** Through our work in the ROE Act Coalition, we helped pass a law that includes key provisions of the ROE Act, expanding access to abortion care for young people ages 16 & 17 and people who get devastating diagnoses later in pregnancy.

These victories closed out our 2019-2020 legislative session wins, which included: banning conversion therapy, repealing the family welfare cap ("cap on kids"), limiting clawbacks on mental health providers, and eliminating insurance company "ghost networks."

At the onset of the pandemic and following the murder of George Floyd we worked quickly to organize around emergency legislation that would save and extend lives, particularly Black lives, during these dual crises. Since January, we successfully:

- Established a Moratorium on Evictions and Foreclosures:** In April, we worked in coalition to pass a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures during the COVID-19 emergency. This moratorium, which was extended once and ultimately expired on October 17, prevented homelessness and housing insecurity for thousands of families across the Commonwealth.

## Budget Wins

In the state's Fiscal Year 2021 budget we worked in coalitions and independently to:

- Fund Therapy Matcher:** We secured \$50,000 for Therapy Matcher, NASW-MA's free therapy referral public service program, allowing us to bring more LICSWs into the network to meet the demand. Thank you to our lead sponsors Sen. Hinds and Rep. Balser!
- Close the SNAP Gap:** As co-chair of the SNAP Gap Coalition, we solidified the state's commitment to closing the SNAP Gap through creation of a common application for MassHealth or the Medicare Savings Program and SNAP. This is in addition to the \$5M we secured through the IT Bond Bill for the technology infrastructure needed to close the SNAP Gap.
- Lift Families Out of Deep Poverty:** Through our leadership role in the Lift Our Kids Coalition, we helped raise TAFDC and EAEDC cash assistance benefits by 10%, helping families in deep poverty better afford basic necessities. The last TAFDC increase was 20 years ago and the last EAEDC increase was 32 years ago, making this a historic victory.



NASW-MA member State Representative Tami Gouveia (pictured with the Boston Red Cloaks) advocates to expand abortion access in Massachusetts by passing the ROE Act





(Left) Wendy Champagnie Williams, PhD, LICSW, facilitator of NASW-MA and GBABSW's Strategies for Wellness—Finding Affinity Among BIPOC Social Workers webinar. (Right) Senate President Karen Spilka, JD, BSW, recipient of NASW-MA's 2020 Beverly Ross Fliegel Greatest Contribution to Social Policy and Change Award.

## Membership

### Celebrating Social Workers and Allies

On December 1, 2020, we hosted our Annual Awards Celebration virtually, honoring the incredible contributions of 7 social workers and allies. We were thrilled to recognize **Sherry Cohen** with the Lifetime Achievement Award, **Senate President Karen Spilka** with the Beverly Ross Fliegel Greatest Contribution to Social Policy and Change Award, **Ximena Soto** with the Greatest Contribution to Social Work Award, **Charlene Luma** with the Emerging Leader Award, **Daniel Mango** with the Future of Social Work Award, **Harris Gruman** with the Public Citizen of the Year Award, and **Rosie's Place** with the Advocate of the Year Award. During

the event we were joined by several special guests, including **Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley**, **State Senator Cindy Friedman**, and **District Attorney Rachael Rollins**.

### Revitalizing the Student Ambassador Program

In 2020 we reinvigorated our Student Ambassador Program, bringing more than 20 student members representing social work programs from across the state into the program to help us strengthen our connections to the next generation of social workers. Together, these dedicated students hosted events geared toward students and newer professionals and are creating innovative ways to build new lines of communication between schools of social work, students, and our Chapter.

**OUR MISSION:** National Association of Social Workers Massachusetts Chapter is a membership association that advances professional social work practice throughout the Commonwealth and advocates for equity and justice for all people.



NASW-MA Board members, staff, and interns gathered virtually for our annual retreat

## Creating Connection During COVID

Recognizing that connection is essential to well-being, and that so many of us found ourselves incredibly isolated due to stay-at-home advisors, we hosted several virtual non-continuing education events designed to help social workers connect and practice self- and community-care. These events included cyber socials and other networking events, free yoga and mindfulness sessions, virtual picnics and luncheons, and more.

## COVID-19 Clinical Information and Telehealth Advocacy

At the onset of the pandemic, with the support of our Managed Care Commission and Managed Care Liaisons, we consistently advocated with the Governor, Division of Insurance, Licensing Board, and directly with specific insurance plans to ensure fair reimbursement for clinical social workers using telehealth. We also updated our website, sometimes daily, with news about the evolving telehealth landscape, including licensing reciprocity, reimbursement, safe practice guidelines, and more. Members in our Private Practice Google Group received these updates via email and joined with us several times to advocate on the state and federal level to improve access to telehealth for both providers and clients.

In March and April, we also sent all of our members weekly “bulletins,” or updates, with information about state regulatory changes, telehealth, resources for food, housing, health care, and more. We brought this information and resource sharing virtual several times throughout the pandemic via Facebook Live conversations with Executive Director Rebekah Gewirtz so our followers could get updates and questions answered in real-time.

**Ultimately, in January 2021, the Governor signed comprehensive telehealth legislation making pay parity for behavioral health providers permanent.**

## CHAPTER STAFF

**Executive Director**  
Rebekah Gewirtz, MPA

**Director of Therapy Matcher and  
Director of Clinical Practice**  
Barbara Burka, LICSW

**Director of Communications & Strategic Initiatives**  
Jamie Kluffs, MPH

**Operations Manager**  
Michael LaBerge, MSM

**Administrative Assistant/  
CE Approval Program Coordinator**  
Adam Linn

**Program Coordinator**  
Crisbelly Medina Adames, MBA

**Membership and Advocacy Manager**  
Noël Schutz, LCSW

## REGIONAL COORDINATORS

**Central Region**  
Jessica O'Neill, MSW

**Southeast Region**  
Melissa B. Dawson, LICSW

**Northeast Region**  
Beth Morrison, LCSW

**Pioneer Valley and Berkshire Regions**  
Jeff Schrenzel, PhD

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2020–2021

**President**  
Sarah Coughlin, LICSW, LADC-1

**Vice President Membership & Diversity**  
Jennifer Valenzuela, MPH, LICSW

**Vice President Budget & Finance**  
Stephanie Small, LCSW

**Secretary**  
Shana Seidenberg, LICSW

**Greater Boston Region**  
Kristin Beville, MPH, LICSW  
Melisa Canuto, LICSW  
Allison Scobie-Carroll, MBA, LICSW

**At Large**  
Laflyn Thompson Wilson, MSW, LSW  
Sarah Wright, LICSW, CDP

**Berkshire Region**  
Marianne Yoshioka, PhD, MBA, LCSW

**Central Region**  
Pamela Chamorro, LICSW

**Northeast Region**  
Lisa Johnson, PhD, MSW

**Pioneer Valley Region**  
Robert Kersting, PhD, MSW, ACSW

**Southeast Region**  
Kevin Terrill, LICSW

**MSW Student Representative**  
Mae Petti

**BSW Student Representative**  
Domingas Lopes

# Continuing Education

While we had to postpone Symposium and cancel LEAD as a result of the pandemic, we worked to quickly adapt our continuing education program offerings to bring you timely, relevant, and affordable webinars and virtual conferences.



In January, Sarah Coughlin, Board President, moderated a panel discussion featuring Nina Aronoff, David Corbie, Anjali Mitra, and Iván Espinoza-Madrigal

## MLK Forum on Racial Justice

In January, we hosted our 6th Annual MLK Forum on Racial Justice where we explored the intersection of environmental justice and racial justice through a social work lens. The MLK Forum on Racial Justice is always a free continuing education program for all social workers. The 2020 Forum was made possible in partnership with the Boston University School of Social Work.

## Nursing Home Conference & School Social Work Conference

Both of these specialized annual conferences were brought virtual this year. The focus of each conference, which normally takes a full year to plan, were quickly shifted to meet the moment and provide social workers in elder care and school settings with desperately needed information, resources, and tools to provide effective care to their constituencies.

## Moving Toward Anti-Racism Conference

Recognizing the impact that schools of social work have on shaping the next generation of social work practitioners, we co-hosted a full-day anti-racism conference in August with the Greater Boston Association of Black Social Workers geared toward administrators, staff, and faculty from schools of social work across MA. The more than 60 attendees heard from keynote Marianne Yoshioka, Dean, Smith School for Social Work, a panel of deans and directors from social work programs across the state, Simmons School of Social Work professor Johnnie Hamilton-Mason, and others to strategize how to integrate anti-racist practices into their institutions, curricula, classrooms, and research.

## Webinars

Collectively, our Chapter and regional staff hosted more than 30 webinars, each worth 1.5 CEUs, bringing you topical and affordable continuing education programming covering everything from social isolation to grief and loss to legislative and political advocacy and much more. One of our most popular webinar offerings was a wellness workshop for BIPOC social workers led by Dr. Wendy Champagne Williams from Bridgewater State School of Social Work. Through our webinar series alone we were able to offer social workers 45 CEUs in 2020.



**National Association of Social Workers**, Massachusetts Chapter, 11 Beacon Street, Suite 510, Boston, MA 02108  
chapter.naswma@socialworkers.org | www.naswma.org | Phone: 617-227-9635 | Fax: 617-227-9877

**Facebook:** NASW-MA Chapter **Twitter:** @NASWMA **Instagram:** @masocialworkers **LinkedIn:** NASW Massachusetts Chapter