

PRESS RELEASE

June 17, 2019

New York City Executive Budget Includes More Social Workers in NYC Schools

New York, NY - Today, the New York City Council voted to approve the budget for Fiscal Year 2020. Included in the budget agreement is an increase in school social workers who will serve high-needs children including Bridging the Gap social workers, who will work to assist students who are experiencing homelessness. The National Association of Social Workers NYC Chapter (NASW-NYC) applauds the work of advocates and organizations who called on the Mayor and New York City Council to prioritize the lives of the most vulnerable among us in New York City.

The budget specifically includes an increase of 216 school social workers. A portion of these social workers are being funded through the Thrive NYC initiative. Another 31 social workers will join the workforce of Bridging the Gap social workers, who specifically support students experiencing student homelessness. This will bring the total number of Bridging the Gap social workers to 100. In addition, the 216 social workers have been baselined so that they are consistently funded in consecutive budgets.

As per Advocates for Children, Bridging the Gap social workers “have provided counseling services to help address the trauma often associated with housing loss, connected students with academic support and resources, and helped to combat chronic absenteeism.” This is life saving work, which can only be done by professionals trained to work in the person-in-environment, as social workers are uniquely trained and qualified to do.

As the base of about 6,000 social workers in the city, NASW-NYC understands the vital skillset, advocacy and knowledge that social workers bring to the various systems within which we work. In addition, we applaud the Mayor, New York City Council Speaker, and the New York City Council for baselining this funding, demonstrating that we do in fact prioritize the most needy in our city.

The chapter also calls on the state legislature to pass legislation, which will require elementary, intermediate, middle, junior and senior high schools throughout New York State to have a full-time licensed social worker and a full-time licensed psychologist on staff to meet the needs of their students. As the mental health and practical needs of students becomes more clear to the general public, we urge the passage of S4217 (Jackson) / A5373 (Ortiz). Social workers save lives and each school should have access to necessary resources.

“With the growing issues of mental health concerns amongst young people and adolescents’ school social workers help save lives and intervene at a preventative level. We thank the New York City Council for committing to an increase in vital school social workers,” said **NASW-NYC President Benjamin Sher**. “

“As social workers, we are keenly aware that much of what students are responding to are the structural inequities and mounting psychosocial problems or interpersonal challenges they face such as bullying, gender identity formation questions, homelessness, suicidal ideations, food insecurity, caregivers who are un or underemployed, illness in their families, substance misuse, and not being connected to adequate and sustained resources. Social Workers address many of these needs because an integrative and holistic psychosocial approach is at the core of our training and who we are. We commend the New York City Council for taking the lead and approving funding for more social workers in schools.” said **NASW-NYC Executive Director Dr. Claire Green-Forde**

“As someone who experienced youth homelessness at a very young age, I know the trauma that one feels when you are a child, displaced, confused, and afraid,” said **NASW-NYC 1st Vice President-elect Brian Romero**. “It was a social worker who provided assistance to my mother when our community was unsure of what to do, and if it was not for her, I don’t know where we would be today. Today, I’m proud to have been saved by a social worker, to be a social worker and to join in the praise of this vital funding, while also acknowledging more can and must be done at the state level.”

Groups involved in this coalition effort included all the Advocates for Children, Women in Need (WIN), Citizens Committee for Children and more.