

HJM 13

Support the Federal Social Work Reinvestment Act: Assisting our Elders

The Federal Social Work Reinvestment Act provides a comprehensive analysis of current trends within the academic and professional social work communities. Specifically, SWR Act will develop long-term recommendations and strategies to maximize the ability of America's social workers to serve their clients with expertise and care. The recommendations will be presented to Congress and the Executive Branch.

***Areas of Focus:** Fair market compensation, high educational debt, social work workforce trends, knowledge development, social work safety, and state level social work licensure and the impact these issues have on the areas of aging, child welfare, military and veterans affairs, mental and behavioral health and disability, criminal justice, and health.*

Older Adults and Their Caregivers Need a Ready Social Work Workforce

According to DHS, about 13 percent of the population in Oregon is 65 years or older, and nearly 76,000 Oregonians are age 85 or older.

Caregivers of Older Adults need support as well.

According to the Institute of Medicine (IOM) (2008), "Family members, friends, and other unpaid caregivers provide the backbone for much of the care that is received by older adults in the United States"

According to the Governor's Commission on Senior Services report:

Accompanying this surge of the "new" elderly will be an accompanying need for mental health and addiction treatment services that are accessible and appropriate to the needs of older adults.

Social Workers are trained to meet these needs

Social workers are some of the first reporters of Elder Abuse

According to DHS, there are 20,000 reports of abuse of elders and people with disabilities annually. Nationally, only 20% of elder abuse cases are reported. Social workers in long term care facilities and emergency rooms are often the first to report abuse. Without such first responders, the rate of reporting would be much lower than 20%. Social workers are mandatory reporters of suspected elder abuse.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Through reinvesting in the social work profession, we can improve quality and access to care for elders across Oregon. To address the *looming workforce crisis in social work*, NASW Oregon is introducing a Joint Memorial (HJM 13) urging the Oregon Delegation, Congress, and the Administration to pass the Dorothy I. Height/Whitney M. Young Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act.

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Sources:

Oregon Department of Human Services. "Elder Abuse: An Under-Reported but Growing Problem" (2011) Retrieved from <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/features/elder-abuse-110118.shtml>
Governor's Commission on Senior Services. "A Study of the Mental Health and Addiction Needs of Oregon's Baby Boomers" (2001)
Board on Health Care Services. *Retooling for an aging America.* (2008)