

SUPPORT HJM 13

THE SOCIAL WORK REINVESTMENT ACT

NASW recently found that 20% of surveyed social workers in Oregon plan to leave the field in the next 3-5 years, and the average amount of student loan debt exceeds \$40,000 while salaries and earning potential remain significantly lower than other masters' level professionals. To address the looming workforce crisis in social work, NASW Oregon is introducing a Joint Memorial (HRM 13) urging the Oregon Delegation, Congress, and the Administration to pass the Dorothy I. Height/Whitney M. Young Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act.

Workforce Challenges in Social Work

- Today social work students often choose other professions with higher salaries.
- High student debt and low salaries make public service careers less desirable.
- Most baby boomer social workers will retire in the next 10-12 years.
- Practice barriers are increasing while workforce supports are decreasing.
- Non-competitive salaries create an 11% pay disparity with comparable positions.
- NIH currently devotes less than 1% of its funding to social work research.
- Social work employers often fill professional jobs with untrained workers in high need practice areas.

Current social work professional shortages, impending retirements, lack of incentives to attract and retain social workers, and insufficient data on the efficacy of social service strategies compromise the ability of social workers to combat a range of social problems that limit our nation's health and potential.

What We Can Do

Here in Oregon we can support the passage of the Federal Dorothy I. Height/Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act. The Act is an effort to review the current workforce challenges, determine how those challenges affect the communities that social workers serve, and better understand the overwhelming need for reinvestment in the profession of social work.

A Social Work Reinvestment Commission will commence to develop long-term recommendations and strategies to maximize the ability of America's social workers to serve their clients with expertise and care.