

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

SUPPORT OUR NATION'S SOCIAL WORKERS ON WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY

April 15, 2008

Dear Colleague:

The United States is experiencing unprecedented levels of social service and health care needs. Social workers are at the frontlines of providing these critical services, such as assisting veterans returning from combat zones with mental health crises, helping elders maintain their independence in communities, and placing abused children in safe homes. Social workers can be found in every facet of community life – in hospitals, mental health clinics, senior centers, and private agencies that serve individuals and families in need.

However, there is a shortage of social workers which will only worsen as our population ages and changes. The number of adults over the age of 65 will double by the year 2030 and social workers will be at the forefront of providing compassionate care for this burgeoning community. Yet today only 30,000 social workers nationally specialize in gerontology, and the Institutes of Medicine (IOM) estimates that we will need 70,000 of these social workers by 2010.

In order to address this impending shortage crisis, we urge you to support the *Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act* today, on World Social Work Day. This legislation reviews the current social work workforce shortage challenges, determines how those challenges affect the communities that social workers serve, and will allow us to better understand the overwhelming need for reinvestment in the profession of social work.

The Social Work Reinvestment Act makes investments in the social work profession by:

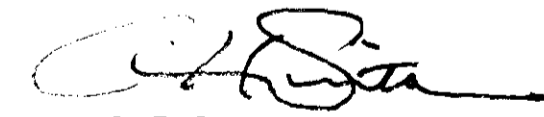
- Funding demonstration grants through the Department of Health and Human Services for social work programs.
- Creating a Commission to study services provided by social workers, issues of social worker recruitment, retention, compensation and safety, and state level social work licensing reciprocity.
- Establishing a National Coordination Center to work with education, advocacy, and research institutions to gather and distribute information on social work research.
- Urging the President to recognize March as Social Work Awareness Month.


We hope you will join us in cosponsoring this important legislation that will support our nation's social workers. To cosponsor this bill, or if you would like additional information, please contact Mona Shah in Senator Mikulski's office at 224-4195 or Lindsay Morris with Senator Smith at 224-5364.

Sincerely,


Barbara A. Mikulski


Debbie A. Stabenow


Gordon H. Smith


Daniel K. Inouye