



# COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

STRENGTHENING THE PROFESSION OF SOCIAL WORK

*Leadership in Research, Career Advancement, and Education*

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OFFICE OF THE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

June 15, 2009

The Honorable Edward Kennedy  
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Enzi  
Ranking Member, Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Enzi:

On behalf of the Council on Social Work Education, I would like to commend you on your efforts to thoughtfully and comprehensively reform the health care system. Thank you for recognizing the significant role that social work plays in the American health care system and for your efforts to include provisions within the draft Affordable Health Choices Act that would enhance and support the health professions workforce, including social work.

In particular, we would like to thank you for including the following programs in Title IV of the bill:

- Mental and Behavioral Health Education and Training Grants
- Pediatric Specialty Loan Repayment Program
- Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Programs
- National Health Service Corps
- Geriatric Workforce Development Fellowship Program
- Geriatric Career Incentive Awards
- Geriatric Academic Career Awards

We are especially pleased with the inclusion of the Mental and Behavioral Health Education and Training Grants program authorized in Section 436. This program would award grants to institutions of higher education to support the recruitment of students into social work programs at all levels and assist in the professional development of social work faculty. The program would give priority consideration to institutions that are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). CSWE is a nonprofit national association representing more than 3,000 individual members as well as over 650 graduate and undergraduate programs of professional social work education with approximately 75,000 students enrolled each year. We are authorized by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as the sole accrediting agency for social work programs in the United States. We establish national educational

standards while evaluating individual academic programs to determine if these standards are met for professional accreditation. If enacted, the programs authorized, reauthorized, or expanded in Title IV of the Affordable Health Choices Act will help students translate the knowledge and skills they are learning in the classroom and in their internships to serving the unique needs of the populations with whom we interact.

As you work to enact comprehensive health reform legislation this year, I urge your continued support for the health professions workforce. As a key component of the health care team, it is critical that the social work profession is supported through education, training, and financial incentives to ensure that we are able to attract adequate numbers of professionals to the field. Your thoughtful legislation would help ensure that we are fostering a workforce that is sustainable, skilled and prepared to tackle the health care needs of all Americans. We hope you will continue to urge your colleagues to support workforce enhancements in health reform this year.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require additional information or have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julia M. Watkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julia M. Watkins, Ph.D.  
Executive Director, Council on Social Work Education