



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

**Government Relations**  
Report to the Board of Directors

**March 2021**

CSWE's government relations efforts at the federal level are supported by Lewis-Burke Associates LLC (Lewis-Burke). Lewis-Burke coordinates and executes the CSWE's federal government relations agenda in close coordination with CSWE leadership and membership. This agenda includes policy development and advocacy focused on higher education, social work workforce development, social work research, and social and economic justice. 2021 marked the start of a new Administration and a new Congress. This will create new opportunities, especially in light of the numerous challenges faced over the past four years, while also requiring continued articulation of the importance of accreditor independence, the value of professional health care delivery, and focusing on the areas where social work education can best play a leading role.

Addressing the impact of COVID-19, calling attention to the impact of institutional racism, and articulating the role of social work in the public health infrastructure, were some of the federal relations priorities going into the new year. This report overviews CSWE government relations efforts from September 2020 to February of this year. Highlights of those efforts include:

- The development and dissemination of *Social Work Education Policy Principles 2020: A Call for Equity and Justice*, which articulates policy principles that will be integral in ensuring individual, family, and community well-being over the next four years;
- Increased funding for programs important to social work education including the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) program and the Minority Fellowship Program;
- Continued advocacy on the importance of COVID-relief aid for students, including DACA and international students; and
- Support for the inclusion of social work within the public health infrastructure.

Please note that this is not a comprehensive compilation of government relations activities and actions.

**Goal 1: Provide leadership for the future of social work education.**

Strategies

- a. Serve as an authoritative source of information on the preparation of social workers.
- b. Collaborate with strategic partners to advance social work education and social justice domestically and globally, including Indigenous peoples.
- c. Provide thought leadership on critical issues facing social work education and research.

- d. Advocate for social work education and research both within the profession and beyond.
- e. Support data informed decision-making on the future social work workforce.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- Support for student aid programs including Pell Grants and the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) programs. The maximum award for Pell Grants will be increased by \$150, bringing the award to \$6,495 for the 2021-2022 school year.
- CSWE joined more than 200 organizations in a letter to President-Elect Biden and Vice President-Elect Harris, calling on them to use executive authority to cancel federal student debt on Day One of their administration. CSWE will continue its advocacy to ensure that increases to student aid, particularly grant aid, is included in proposals to forgive student debt.
- Continued advocacy around the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program, including supporting PSLF Coalition efforts to preserve, protect, and potentially expand the program under the new Administration.
- Increasing advocacy efforts to support social work programs at HBCUs and Minority Serving Institutions.

**Goal 3: Support the career development of students, faculty members and administrators.**

Strategies:

- a. Support student pursuit of social work as a career.
- b. Assist faculty in advancing through their academic career.
- c. Develop future leaders and administrators for social work education.
- d. Advance diversity and broaden the participation of historically underrepresented groups in social work and social work education.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- Advocate for health professions training, education, and loan repayment programs such as the Behavioral Workforce Health Education and Training (BHWET) program, Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP), Geriatrics Academic Career Award (GACA), and the Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment program. Several of these Title VII Health Professions programs received increases in FY 2021, including \$112 million for the BHWET program, which also includes the Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Program and the Mental and Substance Use Disorder Workforce Training Demo.
- Work with congressional champions to expand existing programs rooted in diverse representation in the social work workforce, such as the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) and support other important diversity pipeline programs like Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS). The MFP received an overall \$2 million increase in FY 2021.
- Support legislation calling for the inclusion of social workers in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthening the nation's public health infrastructure. CSWE endorsed the *Strengthening America's Health Care Readiness Act*, introduced by Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL), and the *Health Force, Resilience Force, and Jobs To Fight COVID-19 Act of 2021*, introduced by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Representative Jason

Crow (D-CO). Both bills recognize the need to expand the public health workforce, which includes social workers.

**Goal 4: Foster a diverse, interconnected, and inclusive community of social work educators.**

Strategies:

- a. Provide opportunities for networking and peer-to-peer learning around topics of shared interest.
- b. Provide forums to promote and disseminate research and scholarship that advance social justice, social work and social work education.
- c. Create opportunities for member engagement, volunteer leadership and shared governance.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- Ensure social workers have a voice in policy based on their research and that they continue to be a part of the discussions and eligibility regarding research, services, and programs.
- Monitor and influence research funding opportunities at federal research agencies to provide and expand research opportunities for social work researchers.
- CSWE provided joint comments along with Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) on the 2021-2025 National Institutes of Health Strategic Plan, Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research 2021-2025 Scientific Priorities, and Senator Lamar Alexander’s white paper on Recommendations for Pandemic Preparedness.
- Address the need for the federal government to invest in social determinants of health research to meet the needs of underserved populations.

**Goal 5: Ensure CSWE provides exceptional value to its members and member institutions.**

Strategies:

- a. Increase understanding of and engagement in the full array of programs and services CSWE offers its members.
- b. Invest in the systems and infrastructure CSWE needs to support member engagement and data-driven decision making.
- c. Foster an inclusive workplace culture at CSWE that hires, manages, develops and retains talented and diverse employees.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- Support legislation that provides strategies to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure the rights of everyone are fulfilled.
- Call to rectify cases of disparities in social, economic, racial and environmental justice that lead to inequities across numerous opportunities.
- CSWE and the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) recently provided input on the development of priorities and working group activities for the Council on Economic Mobility.

- Support and influence reforms in policing and immigration which continue to deny rights to black, brown, and immigrant communities through injustices.
- The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and National Association of Social Workers (NASW) welcomed the new members of the 117th Congress. Read the welcome letter [here](#).
- Continued engagement with Congress to advocate for new support for CSWE priorities as members of Congress begin to think about their legislative priorities for the 117th Congress. Some of the congressional offices the CSWE Government Relations team continues to engage with include Representatives Barbara Lee (D-CA), Karen Bass (D-CA), and G. K. Butterfield (D-NC).

Addressing the continued impacts of COVID-19 will be a focus for Congress and the Administration for much of early 2021. For CSWE government relations, this means continued advocacy for aid to students, ensuring the inclusion of social work within efforts to bolster the public health infrastructure, and a sustained commitment to ensuring research and relief efforts acknowledge the disparate impact of the pandemic on communities of color. This means ensuring that the response is inclusive of behavioral health and social safety net supports. There are other areas for CSWE government relations to advance the goals and mission of the organization, including in environmental justice and criminal justice reform. These efforts will need to be balanced with the core mission of advancing the social work education profession via accreditation, student aid, health profession education and training programs, social work research and social and economic justice.

Respectfully submitted,

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