

Laura J. Wernick

2026 CSWE Election: Candidate Statement

Laura Wernick, PhD, LMSW, MPA

Graduate Faculty Representative – CSWE Board of Directors

I am honored to be nominated for the CSWE Board of Directors.

Social work needs to become what it claims to be. We need a profession truly rooted in disability justice, racial and economic justice, feminism, and the acknowledgement of indigenous ancestral land. I've spent my career operationalizing these goals by reshaping classroom pedagogy, dismantling exclusionary academic policies, conducting critical participatory action research, and organizing alongside LGBTQIA+ youth, disabled and elder employers of domestic workers, and progressive wealthy young adults redistributing wealth, land, and power. My scholarship directly confronts ableism and white supremacy culture too often embedded in social work education. It's time our schools of social work lived up to our professional commitments.

I bring lived experience that matters. I'm a non-binary, disabled, chronically ill, white, queer, Ashkenazi Jew in an interracial family, supported by chosen family and community who've pushed me to integrate my roles as educator, activist, scholar, and community builder. As an Associate Professor at Fordham University's Graduate School of Social Service, I teach leadership, community organizing, and nonprofit management. I've chaired Fordham's DEI Council, co-direct the Research Consortium on Disabilities, and help coordinate the university's disability ecosystem. I've also learned about governance by serving on multiple nonprofit boards.

I am just completing my final term as co-chair of CSWE's Council on Disabilities and Persons with Disabilities (CDPD) and used this position to: make conferences more accessible, develop a disability curriculum guide, increase accessibility in practicum programs, and establish a mentorship pipeline for disabled students and faculty. Most importantly, CDPD has made disability justice a centerpiece of CSWE's institutional conversation—including the conference theme itself. But awareness isn't enough. Social work academia systematically excludes disabled faculty, especially disabled faculty of color. I'm committed to the deeper structural change required to transform principles into practice.

I will be a strong board member because I don't just talk about justice—I build it. Let's make CSWE an institution that lives its values.