



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Government Relations
Report to the Board of Directors

February 2022

CSWE's federal government relations efforts are executed by Lewis-Burke Associates LLC (Lewis-Burke). The government relations team works with CSWE leadership and membership to develop an advocacy and policy agenda that advances the mission of social work education. The team keeps leadership and membership apprised of important federal developments and works to ensure social work education has a voice at the federal level. Advocacy efforts are focused on higher education, workforce development and training, social work research, and social and economic justice. While many legislative and policy efforts have stalled at the federal level, efforts to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion via federal programs and policies continue.

This report overviews CSWE government relations efforts from October 2021 to January of this year. Highlights of those efforts include:

- Continued engagement with the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Coalition and a new engagement with the Student Borrower Protection Center, in support of improving PSLF and student loan protections for social work students and practitioners;
- Advocacy on increased funding for the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) via the *Build Back Better Act*;
- Initiated engagement between CSWE and SSWR leadership with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research (OBSSR) which led to our organizations presenting to the NIH OBSSR Coordinating Committee meeting in October.

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.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- Influence agency priorities by responding to HRSA with a letter regarding concerns of workforce data collection and future projections, emphasizing the current and future need to support social workers and the behavioral and mental health workforce.
- Influence agency priorities by weighing in on critical Requests for Information (RFI) from the NIH on plans to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion and health disparities research at the NIH.
- Continuing CSWE's engagement with key decision makers at federal agencies, including leaders at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Office of Minority Health (OMH), National Institutes of Health (NIH), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and others at the Department of Health Human Services (HHS).

- Advance social work education’s voice with the health professions education community via participation and leadership within the Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions and the Minority Fellowship (MFP) Coalition.
- Increase advocacy efforts on delivering the promise of Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) including active engagement with other advocacy groups such as the PSLF Coalition and Student Borrower Protection Center (SBPC).
- Support advocacy efforts to double the maximum Pell Grant to help more students earn a degree including being a part of a national campaign through the Double Pell Alliance.
- Monitor the Department of Education’s negotiated rulemaking on regulatory topics important to CSWE including Income-Driven Repayment (IDR) plans and Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF).

Goal 2: Support the career development of students, faculty members and administrators.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- Work with congressional champions and coalitions to expand existing programs that promote diversity, such as the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) and Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS). The MFP received an overall \$4 million increase in the House FY 2022 appropriations bill, as well as a total of \$50 million for the program in the House reconciliation package currently under consideration. Moving forward to FY 2023, continue to advocate for significant investments and positive changes to the MFP, including efforts to expand the program’s eligibility. This demonstrates strong congressional support for the program, as a result of CSWE’s advocacy efforts.
- 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 the House FY 2022 appropriations bill, including \$181 million for the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) program, a \$69 million increase; \$34 million for the Mental and Substance Use Disorder Workforce Training Demonstration program, a \$4 million increase; \$28 million for the Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery (STAR) Loan Repayment Program, a \$12 million increase above the FY 2021 enacted level; and \$52 million for the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP), a \$10 million increase above the FY 2021 enacted level.
- Provided CSWE and SSWR leadership with frequent agency updates from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to ensure students, faculty, and administrators are knowledgeable of trends and new initiatives at the agency.

Goal 3: Foster a diverse, interconnected, and inclusive community of social work educators.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- Influence congressional priorities by responding to a request for information (RFI) from the Congressional Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) Caucus on challenges and opportunities related to social determinants of health. Continue to build on the success of the RFI submission in holding meetings with the SDOH Caucus staff in shaping future legislative proposals.

- Influence congressional priorities by responding to a Request for Information (RFI) from the Senate Finance Committee regarding the mental and behavioral health workforce.
- Actively participated in the CSWE's Annual Program Meeting (APM) and supported a presentation from HRSA.

Goal 4: Ensure CSWE provides exceptional value to its members and member institutions.

Activities to further this goal and strategies include:

- Endorse legislation that positively impacts the social work community, including the *Social Determinants Accelerator Act of 2021* and the *Improving Access to Mental Health Act*.
- Develop and submit written outside witness testimony the congressional appropriations committees, further highlighting CSWE's priorities in education, healthcare, and research.
- Continuing to support and engage members and member institutions through weekly updates that include, educational resources, funding opportunities, and advocacy engagement opportunities.

Many policy uncertainties remain this year. Including whether Congress will be able to pass a social infrastructure bill (the *Build Back Better Act*), finish fiscal year (FY) 2022 funding (and FY 2023), and how the upcoming mid-term elections in November will impact other legislative efforts. Despite these uncertainties, the CSWE government relations team will continue to advocate for social work education priorities, including increasing student aid, enhancing support for social work education and training programs, and highlighting the importance of social work research at agencies like NIH, among other efforts.

Respectfully submitted,

Otto Katt, CSWE Government Relations