

Enrolled
House Joint Memorial 13

Sponsored by Representatives ROBLAN, TOMEI; Representatives BOONE, BUCKLEY, DEMBROW, DOHERTY, KENNEMER, KOMP, WITT, Senators BATES, NELSON (Presession filed.)

To the President of the United States and the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled:

We, your memorialists, the Seventy-sixth Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon, in legislative session assembled, respectfully represent as follows:

Whereas the need for social workers is expected to increase nationally by 22 percent during the 2006-2016 decade, as estimated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor, and by almost 15 percent during the 2008-2018 decade, as estimated by the state Employment Department, with even greater growth in the areas of mental health and substance abuse; and

Whereas social worker salaries are among the lowest for professionals in general and for those with a master's degree in particular and, according to a survey conducted by the John A. Hartford Foundation, between 1992 and 1999 the annual rate of wage growth for degree-holding social workers was 0.8 percent; and

Whereas a study by the Oregon Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers found that the average annual salary for an Oregon social worker with an average of over 11 years experience was \$48,718; and

Whereas according to a study by the Council on Social Work Education, 68 percent of individuals surveyed who held a master's degree in social work graduated with an average debt of \$26,777, and a survey of Oregon's social workers found that median starting salaries for social workers, adjusted for inflation, have decreased by over 12 percent over the past 40 years while student loan debt has increased by over 250 percent; and

Whereas there is an increased need for social workers specializing in gerontology to work with older adults, including older adults with dementia, to support their physiological, psychological and social needs through mental health therapy, caregiver and family counseling, health education, program coordination and case management; and

Whereas as the number of Americans aged 65 and older continues to grow, the National Institute on Aging has projected that, in 2010, 60,000 to 70,000 social workers working in gerontology were needed; and

Whereas although less than 40 percent of child welfare workers are professional social workers, research shows that professional social workers in child welfare agencies are more likely to find permanent homes for children who were in foster care for two or more years; and

Whereas the Children's Defense Fund reports that every 36 seconds a child is confirmed as abused or neglected, while the Administration for Children and Families of the United States Department of Health and Human Services states that 510,000 children were in the United States foster care system in 2006, most of whom were placed in foster care due to parental abuse or neglect; and

Whereas social workers provide the majority of mental health counseling services in the United States and are often the only providers of such services in rural areas, and the state Employment Department estimates that the need for social workers who provide mental health counseling will increase by over 21 percent by 2018; and

Whereas the United States Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 26.2 percent of Americans aged 18 and older experience a diagnosable mental disorder, with one in five children and adolescents experiencing a mental health disorder and at least 6,000,000 young people, or about one in 10, experiencing a serious emotional disturbance; and

Whereas social workers working with veterans and their families provide case management, crisis intervention, mental health interventions, housing and financial counseling, high risk screening and advocacy services that are vitally needed because, as the United States Department of Veterans Affairs estimates, there are 23,977,000 veterans in the United States and a once-declining veteran population is now increasing due to more than 1,100,000 members of the Armed Forces having been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan since 2001, which has resulted in a dire need for mental health treatment to address issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, drug and alcohol addiction and suicide; and

Whereas health care and medical social workers help cancer patients and their families make informed decisions about their care, provide outreach for prevention of cancer, provide grief counseling and act as a liaison between individuals and their medical team; and

Whereas the American Cancer Society estimates that there were 1,437,180 new cases of cancer and 565,650 cancer deaths in 2008 alone, with the incidence of cancer increasing dramatically as the population grows older; and

Whereas social workers in school settings help students who are at risk for dropping out by providing early identification, prevention, intervention and counseling and support services, which are all vital functions because, as the National Center for Education Statistics found, the national dropout rate for high school students in 2005 totaled 9.3 percent, with white students dropping out at a rate of 5.8 percent, African-American students dropping out at a rate of 10.7 percent, Hispanic students dropping out at a rate of 22.1 percent and some vulnerable communities having a dropout rate of 50 percent or higher; and

Whereas social workers employed in the corrections system, from which, according to the United States Department of Justice, more than 650,000 people are released every year, address disproportionate minority incarceration rates, provide treatment for mental health problems and drug and alcohol addiction and work within as well as outside of the prison to reduce recidivism and increase positive community reentry; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon:

That we, the members of the Seventy-sixth Legislative Assembly, support filling the overwhelming need for reinvestment in the profession of social work in the United States and in the state of Oregon; and be it further

Resolved, That we support the establishment of a Social Work Reinvestment Commission to advise Congress and the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services on policy issues associated with the profession of social work, and support authorization for the Secretary to make grants to support recruitment and retention of social workers and research and reinvestment in the profession; and be it further

Resolved, That we respectfully request Congress to pass, and the President to sign, the Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act, or similar legislation; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this memorial shall be sent to the President of the United States, to the Senate Majority Leader, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and to each member of the Oregon Congressional Delegation.

Adopted by House March 16, 2011

Ramona Kenady Line, Chief Clerk of House

Bruce Hanna, Speaker of House

Arnie Roblan, Speaker of House

Adopted by Senate May 19, 2011

Peter Courtney, President of Senate