



# NASW

National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

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**Testimony Before the Human Services Committee 2/10/2011  
In Support of: SB 9, HB 5432, SB 840, HB 5558, HB 5560, HB 6218 with qualification  
Susan Hamilton Peck, MSW NASW ELAN Committee Member**

The National Association of Social Workers is in support of the above noted legislative proposals with the recommendations for language clarification detailed below. During these challenging economic times, it is imperative that we change the direction in which Connecticut has been going, with efforts to balance our budget woes on the backs of human services. This is harmful to our most vulnerable citizens, and to the Safety Net of service providers and programs that help prevent human catastrophe. It is highly encouraging to hear our Governor emphasizing that we cannot either cut nor tax our way out of the financial mess that we currently face. We need to bring balance back within our state, and to strengthen not destroy the very weak Safety Net supporting those who need it the most.

**SB9 An Act concerning Medicaid Eligibility** Expansion of Medicaid eligibility would be a step towards helping those that our health care reform legislation has not yet reached. Federal waivers have allowed bare bones policies to remain active in the short term, but they do not meet the day to day healthcare needs of low income workers. Expansion of eligibility can allow access to preventive care to more of the working poor in Connecticut.

**HB5560 An Act Concerning an Evaluation of the Medicaid Program** In times where we are demanding evidenced-based practice as part of the expectations in the services we provide, we also need to be evaluating the effectiveness and strengths and weaknesses within our Medicaid program. Working in isolation without evidence and without input from successes and failures from other states leads to poorly informed legislation and programs.

**HB5432 An Act Concerning Limits on Sanctions Under the TANF Program** Other states are handling sanctions differently than we are here in CT. Sanctions should not be applied to benefits designed to meet the needs of children, only the person who is non-compliant. Additionally, Connecticut's time limits for eligibility remain among the most restrictive in the nation and should be expanded, at least temporarily, while our economy continues to move towards recovery.

**SB840 An Act Concerning Educational Activities for Participants in the Jobs First Program** Education and training are key building blocks of truly helping people work their way out of poverty. Without it, they have little hope of true changes in life circumstances. The extensions proposed in this legislation could help make the dream of living independently without need of public assistance a reality. A no cost pilot program of combined Department of Labor and Department of Social Services effort has been suggested by the Legal Assistance Resource Center of CT that utilizes the support of intensive case management for pilot Jobs First Employment Services participants is an excellent option for meeting this need considering the economic times.

**HB 5558 An Act Concerning Educational Opportunities for Recipients of TANF under the Jobs First Program** Creative flexibility as proposed in this legislation could allow CT to comply with Federal law regarding regarding JFES work activity that 'counts' while also allowing those who are engaged or needing to be engaged in work training activities that do not 'count' to meaningfully participate in educational or combined educational and work programs. Without at least a GED, it will be hard for these CT citizens to ever move beyond poverty and our Safety Net supports should NOT be preventing people seeking a base level education from doing so.

**HB6218 An Act Establishing A Task Force on Safety Net Services** A task force on Safety Net Services absolutely needs to have representatives including consumers and those working within the Safety Net Services on the task force. Again the Legal Assistance Resource Center of CT has submitted language that would expand the membership of this task force that would enable it to be a viable and effective working group for meeting the needs of those needing a Safety Net from harm during these continuing challenging economic times and beyond.

It is critical that as we seek to resolve the serious budget deficits that we face that we not do so by removing the last ounces of hope for support for our citizens in the greatest need.

The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much, it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little. -Franklin D. Roosevelt