NASW National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

2139 Silas Deane Highway
Suite 205
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
(860) 257-8066

Karen Bullock, Ph.D., LCSW
Stephen A Karp, MSW, Executive Director
naswct@naswct.net

Testimony on S.B. 27:
An Act Transitioning the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies to an Online Format

The National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter, representing over 3,200 members supports S.B. 27 as a way to make state government regulations more transparent and accessible to the public. This proposal to place state regulations online is long overdue and very much needed.

In 2007 NASW/CT had to hire an attorney to help us identify, print and analyze all of the state regulations that govern the practice of social work in Connecticut. We did this after spending numerous staff hours unsuccessfully trying to locate such state regulations. This guide is now used frequently by staff in answering inquiries from members and employers as to the rules regarding social work practice. For this the chapter spent $1,200, which was an unfortunate but necessary cost because of the difficulty of locating current regulations.

To give you an example of the types of request we receive, a hospital recently contacted us to find out if they must hire a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) for their hospice services. This hospital had an internal candidate with a MSW degree who was not yet licensed, and the hospital wanted to offer her the position. Because we now have the regulations for hospice care social work we were able to inform the hospital that the social worker must be a LCSW for hospice care. We receive similar questions on home care, dialysis social work, nursing home social work, medical records, recovery care centers and school social work positions, all which have regulations governing practice of which many employers and social workers are not aware of.

Another example of why this bill is needed is the hiring of social workers in nursing homes. A 2010 survey of nursing homes completed by NASW/CT with a 50% return rate found that one-third of the homes employed social workers who did not have at least a Baccalaureate degree in social work even though the state regulation requires at least a BSW degree as of January 1, 1989. We believe that if the state regulations were online this kind of wrongful hiring and violation of state regulations would be less common in our field.

The other significant benefit of this bill is that proposed regulations would be easily identified making it far more likely that public input on proposed regulations would be made by interested parties. Last year when DPH was working on changes to the hospice regulations we searched the DPH website to see if any changes were being proposed regarding social work services. However the proposed regulations were not on the DPH website and took considerable amount of inquiry to finally locate a copy of the proposed regulations. In 2012 there is simply no excuse for not having such information online.

As one of my members succinctly stated in response to this bill, "How will we now not know what we are supposed to be doing"? Compliance with state regulations is best accomplished when those regulations are easily found and publicized in an accessible format. S.B. 27 does this and we urge the committee to vote in favor of this important bill.