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HB 6276: Testimony on AAC Training for Health Care Professionals in Youth Suicide Prevention

**Public Health Committee
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The National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter representing over 2800 members supports HB 6276. We believe this is a reasonable requirement that addresses important training that all mental health providers should periodically receive.

Youth suicide is largely preventable when the youth is identified as potentially being suicidal or having suicidal thoughts. Such prevention however is dependent on the youth having an encounter with a health care provider who is adequately trained in the identification of signs of being at risk for suicide. While many mental health providers receive training in suicide identification during their formal education, such training may not have been sufficient and quickly becomes old unless the provider is practicing in a setting where such training is frequently utilized. This bill will assist in having mental health providers kept up to date in the most current skills in identification and intervention related to suicide prevention.

NASW/CT generally has reservations about adding continuing education requirements that are specific to a topic or practice field. We believe that professionals should have the freedom to determine their educational needs. However suicide is a problem that any mental health provider can face in serving any population and this bill has a reasonable training requirement of once every six years, rather than an annual requirement. We do not support new annual mandates on training that are of a narrow special interest.

The one weakness in this bill is that DPH has no enforcement of continuing education requirements, with the exception of when a complaint is filed against a licensed practitioner. We ask the Committee to include an audit requirement of 1% of licensed practitioners per year to be performed by DPH at the time of license renewal. Without an enforcement vehicle bills of this nature will not fully achieve the goal of the legislation.