

House Joint Memorial 13

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

SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure **as introduced**.

Urges Congress to pass Social Work Reinvestment Act.

JOINT MEMORIAL

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

NOTE: Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter [*italic and bracketed*] is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

43 Resolved, That we support the establishment of a Social Work Reinvestment Commission to ad-
44 vise Congress and the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services on policy issues as-
45 sociated with the profession of social work, and support authorization for the Secretary to make

1 grants to support recruitment and retention of social workers and research and reinvestment in the
2 profession; and be it further

3 Resolved, That we respectfully request Congress to pass, and the President to sign, S. 686/H.R.
4 795, known as the Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act, or
5 similar legislation; and be it further

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

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