

Submitter: Jill Summers
On Behalf Of: NASW Oregon
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure: HCR4

I am requesting your support for HCR 4 which declares March as Social Work Month in Oregon. I understand this might seem like an extravagance during a time when many other important legislative work is on your plate, but in fact it serves a valuable purpose. This declaration not only honors current Social Workers, but also attracts new folks to the profession and shows that Oregon is a great place to do this work. Social workers are the largest providers of mental health care in the United States, and Oregon has one of the lowest rates of access to mental health care. The Oregon State Hospital is struggling to attract and retain these professionals, impacting communities across the state who absorb the mentally ill individuals returning after insufficient treatment. Declaring March to be "Social Work Month" is a small but powerful, cost-free way to address this issue, among many others (specifically HB 2651 & 2652, HB 2485 and HB 2977 which address mental health care and workforce development relevant to social work).

Social workers come from all walks of life. In my Masters' degree program at Portland State, we had Democrats and Republicans, veterans of the armed forces and police, both big city and small town residents, urban and rural. Some were interested in helping children, others the elderly; in schools, hospitals, and prisons, from birth to death, and everywhere in between. Social Work is a discipline that crosses all political and social realms. As a social worker at Salem Hospital, I personally help families navigate accessing care for their elderly loved ones - a process that is confusing and upsetting no matter how much money you have or who you voted for. Social Workers usher these families and many more through the most difficult times in their lives with dignity, respect, and personal choice.

Social Work month is celebrated nation-wide in March already, so declaring it to be so in Oregon puts us in line with many other states that celebrate already. I hope you support this rule and enable it to move forward. Thank you!