

## Letters to Officials

### Social Work Compensation

Dear Representative/Senator <....>,

I am writing as a social work professional and one of your constituents to speak about some of the unsung heroes in our community. These are the dedicated individuals who devote their lives to addressing and solving difficult and complex societal problems. And while the profession of social work spans a broad variety of issues, a specific example is the social worker in the Child Protective Services (CPS) field. Over one million children are victims of abuse and neglect each year, with one third of those children being under the age of three.

Unfortunately, social workers in child welfare earn drastically lower salaries than other comparable professions such as teachers. Their passion and commitment to protecting the lives of our children comes at a cost of having to live at or below the poverty level in Texas, even when having graduate degrees. So, keep in mind how much our CPS social workers sacrifice financially and emotionally, while striving to keep our most precious resource, our children, safe from harm.

We should honor their service by compensating them fairly and recognizing their contributions to our community.

Sincerely,

### Social Work Center for Workforce Studies

Dear Representative/Senator <...>,

I am writing as a social work professional and one of your constituents to ask for your support on a specific issue. During the 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislative Session, we worked with Representative Naishtat and Senator Rodriguez on H.B. 2068/S.B.1023, which would have established a small research unit at the Department of State Health Services that would monitor Texas workforce trends as it relates to social workers.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has predicted that there will be a 16-22 percent increase in the need for social workers in the next decade, primarily in areas such as veterans' services, mental health, substance abuse and geriatrics. As a social work professional, I am worried about the ability of Texas to meet those needs without addressing some of the challenges of training that many more social workers. A research unit could be extremely helpful to state agencies who are struggling to keep high quality workers in these difficult fields.

I would be happy to visit with you personally or by phone on this important issue. I will be working with other social workers in this district and across the state to pass a bill next session. I hope you can easily see how this bill could benefit Texas and this community, and that you will support its passage in 2013.

Sincerely,

## **Loan Repayment**

Dear Representative/Senator <....>,

I am writing as a social work professional and one of your constituents to speak about a growing problem in my profession that could have negative consequences in our community and in the state. Due to a number of federal and state cuts to grant programs and universities, students in Texas Schools of Social Work are graduating with very high educational debt. Some informal studies at several universities are reporting that debt to be as high as \$25,000-\$40,000.

To make matters worse, social workers on average earn drastically lower salaries than other comparable professions such as teachers. Their passion and commitment to improving the lives of Texas citizens comes at a cost of having to live at or below the poverty level in Texas, even when having graduate degrees. Other professionals, such as doctors, nurses and teachers, frequently have a variety of loan repayment or subsidy programs available to them, but social workers do not. We are seeing a trend in social workers being unable to survive (and pay educational loan payments) in a social work position and being forced to seek employment in other areas.

My association, the National Association of Social Workers/Texas Chapter, will be seeking a sponsor for a social work loan repayment program for the 83<sup>rd</sup> legislative session. Please consider sponsoring and/or supporting such a bill.

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss this and other topics at your convenience. Thanks for your service.

Sincerely,