

**Presentation to the House Health and Human Services Committee
January 15, 2009**

Good afternoon Chairman Riesberg and members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to explain social work and social workers. My name is Jean Greenberg. I am a social worker representing the Colorado Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. The National Association is the oldest and largest social work professional organization world wide with a national membership of over 150,000. In Colorado we have more than 2,300 members living and working in every legislative district in the state. The Chapter's mission is "a professional association that advocates for the promotion, development and protection of the practice of social work and social workers." I have also been asked to convey the interests of the Colorado Society of Clinical Social Workers, primarily private practitioners, we often work collaboratively.

The questions most often asked are "what is a social worker" and "what do they do?" Social workers are professionals with bachelor's, master's or doctorate level training and supervised work experience who work with individuals, families, groups, and communities at every stage of life from cradle to grave, in every setting from schools, medical and psychiatric facilities, private and public social service agencies, prisons, corporations, government, and private practice. In Colorado we have social workers who are legislators, lobbyists, mental health providers and public administrators. Social workers help individuals, families, and communities overcome challenges and problems of every day living including poverty, discrimination, abuse, divorce, addiction, mental and physical illnesses, among others. Social workers are the largest professional group providing mental health treatment in the country. One frequently finds social workers in unlikely settings such as company HR departments, owners of social service agencies, agency program directors and the state legislature. The biggest problem in knowing who are social workers is they frequently define themselves by their function as opposed to their professional identity i.e. as case managers, psychotherapists, administrators, caseworkers, discharge planners, etc. However, these are only a few of the functions of social work as the work ranges from individual and group psychotherapy services, to community organization, advocacy, and teaching; again only a few of the myriad of jobs in which one will find a social worker.

The social work profession has its own body of knowledge, code of ethics, practice standards, credentials, state licensing, and a nationwide system of accredited education programs. These equip the social worker to combine the desire to help others with the knowledge, skill, and ethics needed to provide that help. In Colorado, one must have a degree in social work from an accredited school of social work in order to call oneself a social worker. We also have licensure that gives us further title protection. We are motivated to ensure the continued professionalism of our licensees. For this reason, this legislative session we are introducing HB 1086 which mandates continuing competency (the current nationally accepted practice replacing continued education) as we are one of 3 states in the US that does not have this mandate for licensed social workers.

Should you have further questions or need for more information, please feel free to contact Renee Rivera, LCSW, our Chapter Executive Director at 303-753-9980 or our lobbyist, Jennifer Miles, MSW, at 303-668-3979 or jennifer@milesgovtrelations.com.