

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 20, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Social workers and other mental health providers are essential to creating healthy individuals, families, and communities. Recognizing this, we respectfully request your support in the creation of a Social Work Reinvestment Commission by Executive Order to review the workforce needs and challenges in the field of social work.

As you may know, there is legislation pending in Congress related to this effort, H.R. 795/S. 686, the Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young Social Work Reinvestment Act. Introduced by Representative Towns and Senator Mikulski, the measure has been identified as a priority for the Congressional Black Caucus, and supports the establishment of a Social Work Reinvestment Commission. The Commission will provide a comprehensive analysis of workforce trends and current gaps in services and incentives to recruit and retain professional social workers. The bill has received overwhelming Democratic support in the House. Also, more than 100,000 letters of support have been submitted to the House and Senate by constituents. The benefits derived from this effort significantly outweigh any negligible costs associated with the measure.

The growing demand for social workers -- the needs of returning veterans, displaced and unemployed workers, families in poverty, the elderly, children, incarcerated, the chronically ill and disabled, the mentally ill and other populations are too important to delay the establishment of this commission. With many states and local governments facing budget challenges, the jobs held by social workers and the services associated with the work they do are particularly vulnerable. More importantly, the confluence of these dynamics are occurring at a time when the Bureau of Labor Statistics has identified a current and growing shortage of social workers.

The BLS estimates that the current social work workforce is not sufficient and we will need an additional 130,000 social workers by 2016. There are already documented shortages in child welfare and aging.

In the wake of Dr. Dorothy Height's death and as the embodiment of everything she stood for, we respectfully request you to establish by executive fiat, or other mechanisms, the Social Work Reinvestment Commission. Thank you again for your time

and effort on behalf of the nation's social workers, and the client populations they serve. Should you have any further questions or concern, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,



Edolphus "Ed" Towns
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Luis Gutierrez
Member of Congress



Rush Holt
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Ciro Rodriguez
Member of Congress