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2009 Legislative Scoop Sheet

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From the Editor's Desk ~ by Katharine Bobel and Nilda Fernandez

With a little over a month left of the 2009 Legislative session of the Connecticut General Assembly it is important for all of us to remember that we still need to continue to advocate on behalf of these very important bills. Now is one of the most critical times for bills and if we do not act on them they will be at risk of not being passed. There are many bills and each one still needs to be voted on by both the House and Senate and then signed by Governor Rell in order to be passed. Now is not the time to sit back and wait. Your voices need to be heard. Contact your state legislator today and let them know the importance of these particular bills. Also call the committees that these bills are in and let the committee members know your views on these bills. As Social Workers we need to continue to advocate for the change we want to see and that we work so hard for.

Lastly, this is the last issue of the Legislative Scoop Sheet this year. We would both like to thank all those who have submitted articles each week and helped to keep the Social Work community informed on these very important issues. We would also like to thank all of you for taking the time to read our issues and ask for your continued support in advocating on behalf of these very important bills.

SB 899 An Act Implementing the Guarantee of Equal Protection under the Constitution of the State for Same-Sex Couples- ~ by Caryn Lacedonia

SB 899 was tabled for the Senate calendar on April 16th. Most of the bill will become effective the date it is passed, except that remaining civil unions will not be transformed into marriages until October 10, 2010. **For continuing information visit the Love Makes a Family website at www.lmfct.org or call Matt at (860) 525-7777.**

Electoral Reform ~ by Addie Sandler

HJ 113, A Resolution amending the State Constitution to allow early voting was tabled for the session. **HB 6435 An Act Concerning Election Day Registration and Presidential Ballot Procedures**, to promote voter participation by permitting individuals to register and vote on the day of a regular election was referred by the House to the Committee on Planning and Development on April 14th. **Please continue to follow this bill by going to the Connect General Assembly website at www.cga.ct.gov and search for Bill numbers HJ113 and 6345.**

As social workers, we must work together to make sure that everyone is given equal access to vote and to have their voice heard.

SB 678: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING CHRONIC DISEASE MANAGEMENT AND WELLNESS AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES TO REDUCE HEALTH CARE COSTS ~ by Courtney Cullinan

SB 678, The bill to reform the health care delivery system in order to provide better health outcomes for patients while containing the exponential growth in health care spending is now in the Government Administration and Elections committee.

This bill establishes a process for health care providers and patients to engage in "shared decision making" concerning treatment options for the patient. In effect, this process involves the provider sharing with the patient all relevant risk and benefit information on all treatment alternatives, and the patient sharing with the provider all relevant personal information that may indicate that one treatment or side effect may be more or less tolerable than others. In addition, the bill formally recognizes shared decision making in informed consent law, and encourages collaborative efforts to develop and use "patient decision aids." The bill requires the Department of Public Health (DPH) to develop and implement a shared decision making demonstration project. The bill creates the Connecticut Health Care Cost Containment Authority to develop a community-based health care utility model for the reform of health care service delivery. Finally, the bill prohibits certain billing practices concerning anatomic pathology services.

To continue to follow this bill, go to the CGA website www.cga.ct.gov and search for Bill number 678.

HB6361 An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Program

by Kate Parker

While the bill awaits action in the appropriations committee, President Barack Obama has proclaimed the usefulness of victim-centered services like a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Program. In the **FIRST** ever proclamation made by a President recognizing Sexual Assault Awareness Month, President Obama stated:

“Victims need an array of services to heal from the trauma of sexual assault...Landmark legislation has helped fund these critical services...For example, since 1997, VOCA [Victims of Crime Act] funding has supported the development of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner programs and multi-disciplinary Sexual Assault Response Teams....To make continued progress my Administration supports efforts to help Americans better understand this issue. Working together, we can reduce the incidence of sexual assault and help all who have experienced this crime...I urge all Americans to respond to sexual assault by creating policies at work and school, by engaging in discussion with family and friends, and by making the prevention of sexual assault a priority in their communities.”

Nationally, there is a shift towards developing and utilizing specialized services like a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Program. Whether Connecticut embraces this shift is a matter of fiscal priority and a value priority of supporting survivors of sexual violence.

For more information about HB6361 visit www.connsacs.org

24/7 Staffing at Domestic Violence Shelters

by Robin Kraemer

Due to the economic situation in Connecticut and across the nation, new money is not likely to be allocated to fund 24/7 staffing this year. The state has proposed the use of some money from the federal economic stimulus package, with required state funds matching, to fund the prevention of violence against women. The proposed one time allocation of \$400,000 would enable domestic violence shelters to increase staffing at some shelters for one year, but would not be enough to fill all the gaps. It has been calculated that a total of \$3 million annually would be needed to provide 24/7 shelter staffing at all 18 domestic violence programs across the state. **A final lobby day is scheduled on Thursday, April 23rd at 10 am** to express our appreciation for not receiving any major funding cuts in the proposed budget, and remind legislators that there is still an urgent need for 24/7 staffing at domestic violence shelters in Connecticut.

Updates on this issue can be found at

Affordable/Supportive Housing ~ by Katharine Bobel

HB 5071 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING INITIATIVE was referred to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee on March 16th. The deadline to vote on bills for the Finance committee was on Friday April 17th and the bill was not brought up in the meeting so therefore it has died. There is still a possibility that this bills language can be written in as an amendment to another bill. **There will be a lobby day for Supportive Housing on Tuesday May 5th from 10am—4pm.** The Housing Committee can be reached at 860-240-0340. The Finance Committee can be reached at 860-240-0460.

Multi-Level Licensure ~ by Sarah Chasse

H.B. 6676 An Act Concerning Licensure of Clinical Social Workers was passed out of the Appropriations Committee on Wednesday, April 15th. The bill was amended to be implemented within existing Department of Public Health funds, and will create revenue for the state. The bill will now move to the House and be referred to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee. **Please contact Sarah at NASW/CT (860)257-8066 to help with phone banking** into membership districts with legislators on this committee. Help ensure this valuable professional advancement legislation is passed, as recent graduates will greatly benefit from the new level of social work licensure.

SB 15 “An Act Providing In-State Tuition to Children of Immigrants ~ by Nilda Fernandez

Unfortunately, SB 15 An Act Providing In-State Tuition to Children of Immigrants did not have much life this legislative session. In January, the bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement where it remains.

Thus far, ten states, including New York, have granted in-state tuition to immigrant students (who are undocumented). Allowing students access to higher education will be beneficial to the states intellectual capital and workforce. Let’s make CT the next state that grants in-state tuition to children of immigrants.

Please contact your legislator @ www.cga.ct.gov or call the Joint Committee at 240—0280.



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