

**NASW-NYS/NYC
2025**

Advocacy Toolkit



NASW-NYS/NYC Advocacy Toolkit

Advocacy is part of the Social Work Code of Ethics. As social workers, we have an **obligation**

to champion policies that improve the lives of our clients.

This guide will help you discover the different ways of getting involved!

First things first... do you know your representatives?

[Click here to find your
representatives.](#)

Click here to find more info
about the next election!



GOVERNMENT

WHO TAKES CARE OF WHAT?

Your food is safe. Your state has roads and schools. Your community has parks and police. Government makes these things happen... and more.



FEDERAL

STATE



Safe travels! The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) ensures that flying is safe.



How much? The U.S. mint manufactures and distributes the coins we use. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing prints our paper money.



Ensuring national security. The Department of Defense provides the military forces needed to prevent war and keep our country safe.



Protecting plants and animals. U.S. Fish and Wildlife focuses on protecting endangered species.



To your health! The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves all medicines and sets food safety standards.



Learning more on your behalf. The National Institute of Health (NIH) supports research into the causes and cure of diseases.

FEDERAL AND STATE



How green it is! National and state governments create and maintain about 300 million acres of parks and forests.



Correctional facilities – prisons – house people who have been convicted of a crime.

FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL



Road trip! About 4 million miles of roads criss-cross the U.S.



Safe and sound. Community police, state troopers, the National Guard, and the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) work to fight crime.

FEDERAL AND LOCAL



Vote! The Constitution establishes how national elections are held. Local governments, with State oversight, arrange for polling places where people cast their vote.



Go fish! But first you'll need a state-issued fishing license. The same goes for hunting.



Tests to pass. Lawyers and other professionals must pass a state licensing exam in the state where they plan to work.



Ratify! Any amendment to our Constitution must be approved, or ratified, by 38 states.



Getting well. A state controls all the hospitals within its borders and exerts direct control over specific facilities.



Electing our President. Every state chooses electors for the Electoral College. Electors cast votes for whichever candidate gets the majority of votes in the state.

STATE AND LOCAL



Your teachers, your schools. Local communities hire teachers, build schools, and provide transportation to and from school. What gets taught is the state's responsibility.



911 Quick, call 9-1-1! Your community's first responders – firefighters, police, and EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians) – are there in minutes.



Read, play, enjoy. If you like libraries, sports fields, parks, and other recreation facilities in your community, say thank-you to your local government.



Electricity, natural gas, and water are necessities to be managed and distributed. Local communities are in charge.



P-U! That's what you might say without the garbage collection provided by your community's sanitation department.



Bumpety-bump. Without your local government to repair the roads and fix potholes, you may end up with a rough ride.



LOCAL

Meeting With an Elected Official

STEP 1: Look up your elected officials.

STEP 2: Keep an eye out for upcoming events to engage with them: town halls, meetings, virtual events, etc.

STEP 3: Search for existing groups and coalitions, get creative! They may be on Facebook or part of existing social clubs or political groups.

STEP 4: Do some research! What Issues mean the most to you & what organizations or elected officials are working to solve these Issues?

STEP 5: You know your community, so share your thoughts with your elected officials! Start building a relationship before you have an "ask".

STEP 6: Ask to set up a call or meeting to introduce yourself and share your interests. Go to the "contact" page on their elected official website.

State Level Government

New York Legislature Fast Facts:
The Governor of New York is chosen by popular vote. This is done once every **four** years. There are no term limits.

The New York Legislature is divided into two chambers: the Senate, and the Assembly.

Assembly

150 seats

(two year term)

The Speaker of the Assembly is elected by the Majority Party presiding in the Assembly



Senate

63 seats

(two year term)

The Presiding officer of the Senate is the Lieutenant Governor, which runs on the same ticket as the Governor

State Level Government

NYS Legislative Session meets **every** year. It begins in early January and concludes in mid June.

Only the Governor may call a Special Session to bring the legislature back into session once it has ended.

Legislators have Capitol offices and District offices, so you can advocate from any area of the state!

State Level Advocacy: Meeting With a Legislator

STEP 1: Find your legislators and their contact information (Link on page two)

STEP 2: Learn about your legislators: Know basic information about them-

- Where are they from?
- What committee's do they serve on?
- What legislation have they worked on?

STEP 3: Call or Email asking to schedule a meeting: “Hi, my name is ____ and I am a constituent in your district as well as a social work student/professional. Can I please set up a brief visit with ____ or the staff to discuss policy issues important to social workers?”

STEP 4: Prepare for your meeting:

- Have your “Ask” – Determine 1-2 issues you are especially passionate about
- Know your “Why” – Review information on your chosen issues or legislation. Reflect on how the issue relate to social work and why you care about the issue.

New York City Government



The Mayor is the City's chief executive officer, setting the agenda for the City and its finances and appointing Deputy Mayors and heads of agencies to carry out policies.



The City Council is NYC's legislative body. There are 51 elected members, one from each council district. Besides enacting legislation, the City Council approves the City's budget and has oversight powers for the activities of City agencies. Council Members are closely involved with community boards in the districts they represent and serve as members of their boards' District Service Cabinets.



The Borough President appoints the members of community boards for two-year terms, reviews and makes recommendations on ULURP (Uniform Land Use Review Procedure) applications, maintains planning and budget offices, administers training to community board members and serves as chairperson of the Borough Board and Borough Service Cabinet.



The Public Advocate is a non-voting member of the New York City Council with the right to introduce and co-sponsor legislation. Prior to a 2002 charter revision, the Public Advocate was also the presiding officer of the Council. The Public Advocate also serves as an ombudsman for city government, providing oversight for city agencies, investigating citizens' complaints about city services and making proposals to address perceived shortcomings or failures of those services.

New York City Advocacy

1. The first step is knowing who your representatives are and how to contact them. Community Boards, City Council Members, and Borough Presidents are responsible for representing individual boroughs, districts, and communities, including yours.
2. All New Yorkers are represented by three elected officials who hold citywide office: the mayor, the Public Advocate, and the Comptroller.
3. To find your Community Board and City Council district and representative, all you have to know is your address.
4. All Community Board meetings are monthly and open to the public; you can find the address of your Community Board online.
5. Once you know who your City Council representative is, you can utilize their City Council Office contact information to reach out to them about issues that you think need to be addressed in your community or throughout the city.

Tips for a successful meeting:

Bring others!

- No need to go in alone. Lobby visits can be a small handful of individuals all advocating for a piece of legislation they want passed.

Invite members of your workplace, organizations you belong to, other social workers, etc.

Showcase your skills and personality in the conversation

- Let the legislator know what you are advocating for is important for social workers!
- Bring your perspective and personal experience into the meeting. You can mention this in your phone call or email when setting up the visit as well. People may not always remember what you say, but they will remember how you made them feel!



More tips on the next page!

Admit if you do not know the answer to a question a legislator or staff asks

- They understand that you may not know all aspects of the issue you are discussing.
- Indicate: what additional information the legislator is requesting, and a tentative time to send the information to them (ex. a week). (Be in contact with the representatives office)

Have a leave-behind

- Make sure to leave the legislator with some sort of material that briefly encompasses what was discussed. Such as a one-page position paper for a piece of legislation
- After the visit is concluded, follow up with an email letting them know you appreciate their time and want to be a resource for them in the future.

“This year’s budget will put money back in New Yorkers’ pockets and make our streets and subways safer. Working together with my partners in the Legislature, we can get this done and make New York the best place in the country to raise a family.”
Governor Kathy Hochul



Watch the video above!

2025 STATE OF THE STATE HIGHLIGHTS

Mental Health

- Strengthen Kendra's Law so those with serious mental health challenges get into long-term treatment instead of cycling in and out of the system or living on the streets.
- Expand involuntary commitment into a hospital to include someone who does not possess the mental capacity to care for themselves, such as refusing help with the basics: clothing, food, shelter, and medical care.

Youth Mental Health

GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL

- Invest more in mental health first aid and clinics in schools.
- Increase protections for youth on social media.
- “Unplug and Play” initiative - build new playgrounds and create new opportunities for kids to join music and drama clubs, youth volunteer organizations, and sports teams.

2025 STATE OF THE STATE HIGHLIGHTS

Children & Families

- Child Tax Credit: Triple the maximum benefit to \$1,000 for babies and kids up to four. Boost the credit for school-age children to \$500 in 2026.
- \$110M to build/renovate childcare centers and establish a corps of on-call, substitute childcare professionals.
- Free school lunch and breakfast.

Affordability

- Middle-class income tax cut for those making less than \$323,000.
- Inflation refund for those making less than 300,000 dollars a year
 - \$300 for individuals; \$500 for families

Domestic Violence

- Close the loopholes in our discovery laws that delay trials and lead to cases being thrown out for minor technicalities.

2025 STATE OF THE STATE HIGHLIGHTS

Housing

- Invest an additional \$100M in local development.
- \$100M to build starter homes and provide down payment assistance for first-time homebuyers.
- Proposed a housing development ombudsman to streamline approvals and get shovels in the ground sooner.
- Ban private equity companies from bidding on properties the first 75 days they're on the market.
- Ban price fixing software that inflates rents.

Climate Change

- Calling for a \$1B investment to further the transition to a zero-emission economy.
- Build power-ready sites for green industries.

Education

- Make community college completely free for students ages 25-55 who enter high-demand fields like advanced manufacturing, education, and healthcare.

2025 NASW NYS/NYC Legislative Priorities

The Legislative Priorities are voted on by the AGR Committee to advance the field of social work and the communities we serve.

The Chapter is leading the movement on these priorities, as opposed to joining a coalition with other organizations.

View the sections below to read the NASW NYS/NYC position papers and view information on each topic.



1

Addressing Disparities in Social Work Salaries

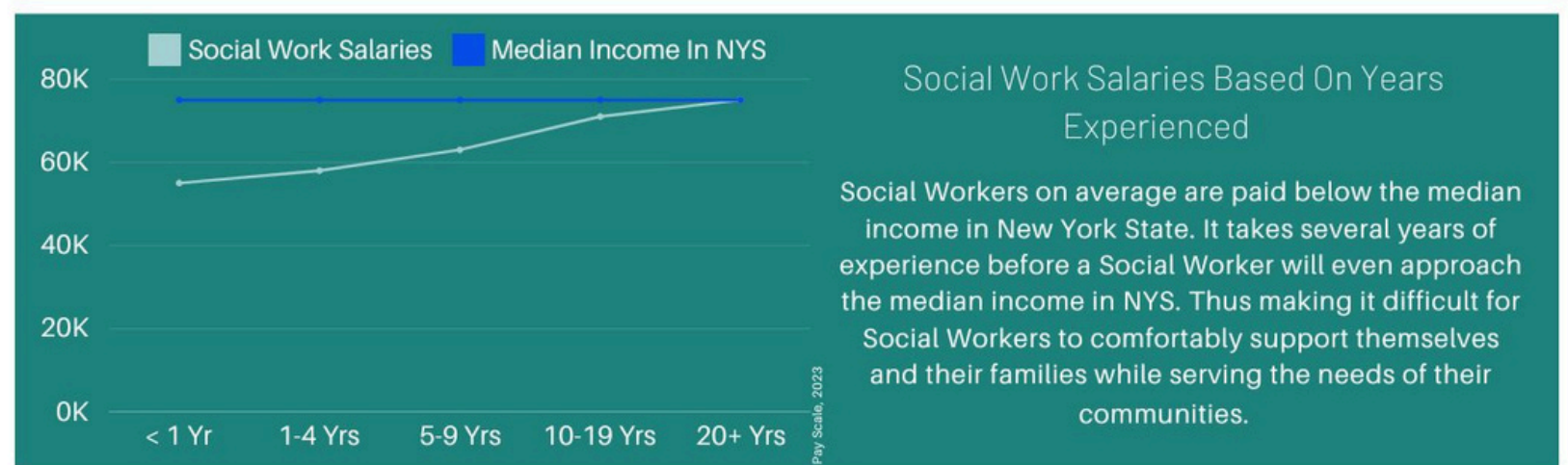
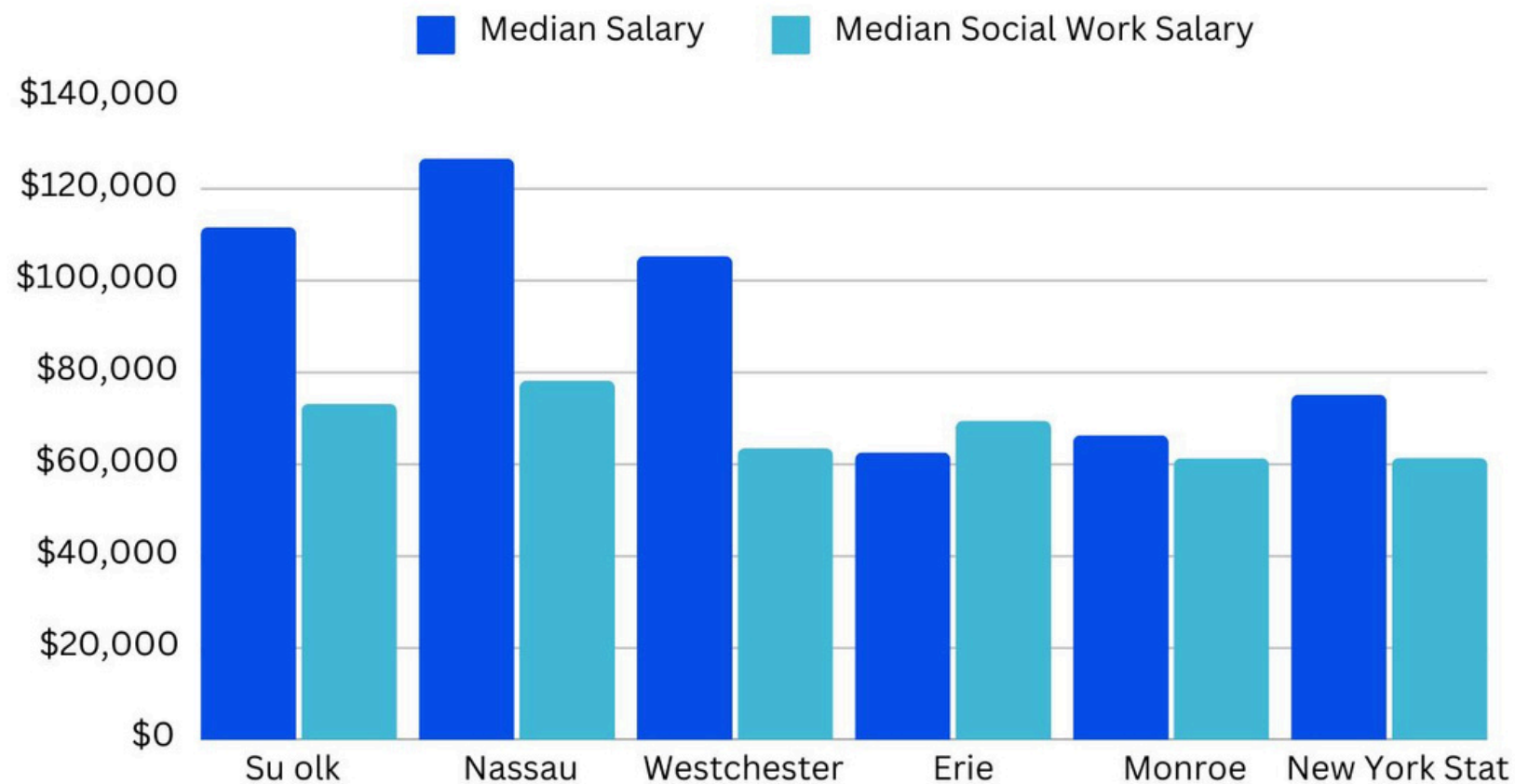
**[Click here to read the position paper to
address inequities in social work salaries.](#)**

**[Click here for the 2022 Social Work Salary
Analysis Report.](#)**

ADDRESSING INEQUITIES IN SOCIAL WORK SALARIES

Salaries have been an issue since profession inception

Salaries are **low** and **not comparable** to the skill set needed to serve



2

Expand Loan Forgiveness Programs

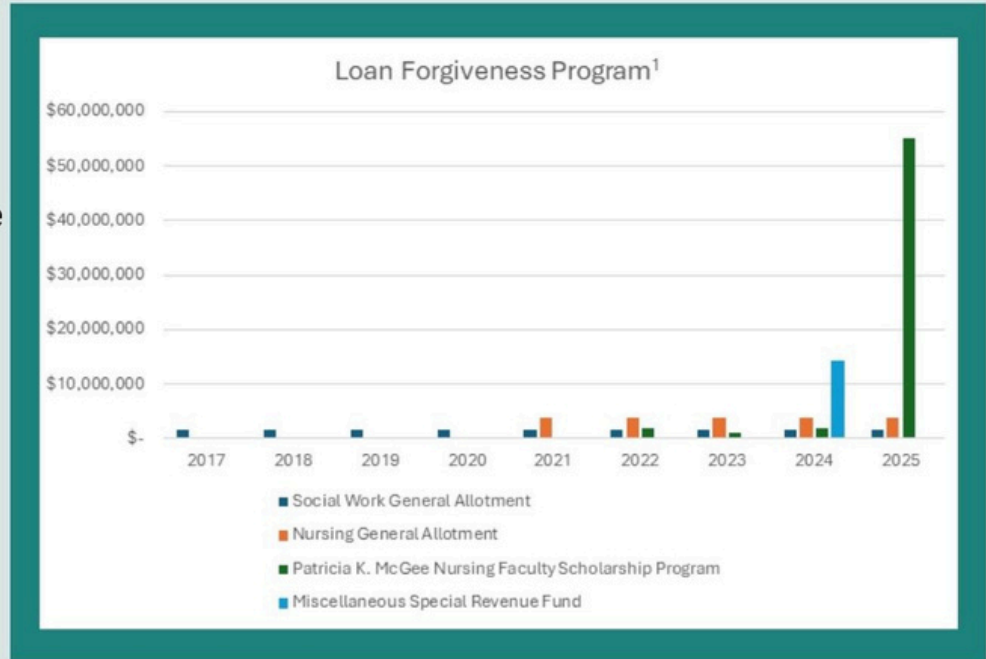
Click here to read the position paper to expand loan forgiveness programs for social workers across the State.

Social Workers Need Relief: Reinforce Loan Forgiveness in NYS



Background:

The allocated \$1.78 million for loan forgiveness has remained stagnant since 2016—almost a decade—despite the growing need and exacerbated mental health crisis in the State. A 2024 NASW NYS survey found about 61% have over \$60,000 in debt, and up to \$400,000.



Current Status:

The annual allocation for an individual applying through the Higher Education Services Corp. is \$6,500, capped at 26,000. The current funding can only support approximately 273 individuals annually. This is not sufficient to address workforce shortages and stop NY social workers from leaving the profession and or the State for better options.



Our Vision:

The FY 2024-25 NYS Budget must double the funding for social worker loan forgiveness to 3.5 million. This will assist 546 New York social workers find some relief as they continue to provide vital services, while often earning wages not reflective to their workload and expertise.

Hear from our members:

Social workers stay in the field because they care about those they serve- but they are struggling.

“I will have financial freedom and my mental health will be at ease. I will be able to help clients without being stressed with my own personal life.”

“There are several social workers leaving the social work field because they can’t afford to live or handle student loans. This is truly discouraging and becoming a shortage on those entering or staying in the field to help our community.”


“I am 72 years old and will waiting until 75 + to retire . I look forward to volunteering with youth mental health when I retire.”

3

Supporting School Mental Health

[Click here to read the position paper to support the mental health crisis within the elementary and high school populations in New York State.](#)

SUPPORT SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH



There is a growing and unmet need for mental and behavioral health services for children and youth in our schools. Social-emotional development and mental health play an enormous role in student wellness and academic success. The School Social Work Association of America recommends a ratio of 1:250 school social workers to students, and an even lower ratio of 1:50 where students require more intensive care.

Read the report produced by NYS Comptroller, Thomas DiNapoli from 2022 around NYC School Mental Health Professional shortages [here](#).

Many Schools Have Far Less Than the Recommended Number of Mental Health Professionals on Staff

Click here for NASW Standards for School Social Workers



National Association of Social Workers

Our Coalition Partners

NASW NYS/NYC Supports

The Social Work Workforce Act

NASW-NYS/NYC Chapters continue to partner with Social Workers for Justice, Latino Social Work Coalition, and other mental health organizations such as NAMI-NYC, to repeal the requirement for the ASWB exam for entry-level social workers.

Temporary Disability Insurance

NASW NYS/NYC continues to work with A Better Balance to fight for equity in paid medical leave. New Yorkers deserve a paid medical leave program that works for them. It is time for New York to reclaim its leadership status by modernizing paid medical leave to ensure that workers can also take the paid, job-protected time they need to care for their own serious illness or injury.

Our Coalition Partners

NASW NYS/NYC Supports

Right to Remain Silent

Youth, parents, juvenile justice advocates, elected officials, public defender organizations, faith leaders, and others announced the formation of the #Right2RemainSilent campaign, a statewide coalition to secure passage of legislation (S.2800/A.5891) that will codify young New Yorkers' right to counsel before a police interrogation(THE CITY).

The New York Health Act

The New York Health Act [A1466/S3425], a bill with majority support in the state legislature, will provide comprehensive, universal healthcare – including dental, mental healthcare, and long-term care! – for everyone who lives in or works full-time in New York. Health insurance coverage will no longer be tied to our jobs. Economic studies show that New York State would save billions, and at least 90% of New Yorkers would save money. Read NASW NYS/NYC Statement here.



**Click on any of the items to contact
your representatives!**

7.8 COLA

**Human services
wage board**

**FUND Social Work
Loan Forgiveness**

**Expand Social Work
Loan Forgiveness**



**ACT
NOW!**

**Support School
Mental Health**

**Social Work
Workforce Act**

#R2RS

NY Health Act

TDI Reform



At Capitol Action Day, we'll have a chance to talk with legislators about the issues that matter to us—and most importantly, to **you**.

It is our hope that Capitol Action Day will be an effective exchange between you and legislative leaders from both the Assembly and Senate.

Attendees will visit their legislators throughout the day via legislative appointments or blanket canvassing to advocate for our Chapter priorities.

At the individual meetings, attendees may also advocate for their communities' political agendas.

At Capitol Action Day and beyond, it is our goal for NASW NYS/NYC members and social workers develop a relationship with their representatives.

Stay tuned for Capitol Action Day 2026!

GET INVOLVED WITH NASW–NYC/NYS ADVOCACY

There are three (3) ways to get involved in chapter advocacy efforts:

Use the NASW–NYC/NYS ACT NOW Direct Advocacy Page

Find bills aligning with our legislative priorities and share your personal stories and perspectives. Use the ACT Now page to urge key legislators to pass bills to better the social work profession and help the communities we serve!

[Click HERE to access the ACT Now Page](#)

The NASW–NYC/NYS Advocacy & Government Relations (AGR) Committee

AGR is a way for NASW-NYS and NYC members to take the lead on our Chapter's advocacy and policy work. The committee is tasked with crafting and executing a yearly legislative agenda for the Chapter.

[Click HERE to access the AGR Committee](#)

The NASW–NYC/NYS Political Action for Candidate Election Committee (PACE):

PACE endorses and contributes to state and local candidates for elected office. Responsible for working collaboratively with the chapter to guide the process of endorsements, raising and distributing funds for political action, and mobilizing social workers to vote by informing members of which candidates have been endorsed.

[Click HERE for NASW-NYC/NYS PACE](#)



PLEASE NOTE: Membership is required to join advocacy committees. Click [here](#) to view membership benefits and/or renew your membership.

*If you have any questions,
require assistance in
contacting representatives,
or have any advocacy
issues - Reach out to the
Policy Team!*

Contact us [here](#).



N A S W

National Association of Social Workers

NEW YORK CHAPTER

***Thank you to all of
our members!***

***This document was last updated
in 2025***

Your VOICE

Your VOTE

Your POWER



National Association of Social Workers
NEW YORK STATE CHAPTER
& NEW YORK CITY CHAPTER