

<http://www.socialworkblog.org>

U.S. Senator Mikulski Reintroduces Social Work Reinvestment Act to Honor Dr. Dorothy I. Height

Immediate Release
March 27, 2009

Social Workers Celebrate 97th Birthday of Civil Rights and Women's Rights Leader

Washington, DC - [U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski](#) introduced legislation this week that will strengthen the nation's workforce of more than half a million professional social workers. The goal of S. 686 is to ensure access to a range of critical social work services provided in hospitals, schools, clinics, agencies, the military, and in private businesses. The bill is named in part for Dr. Dorothy I. Height, one of the key architects of the civil rights movement and a distinguished social work pioneer.

The Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act was introduced to address the impending shortage of trained social workers, and investigate barriers to recruiting and retaining these professionals. The legislation calls for a Social Work Reinvestment Commission that will analyze how issues such as fair market compensation, educational debt, labor trends, social work research, workplace safety, and state-level licensure contribute to an insufficient social work labor force.

In addition, proposed demonstration programs would fund competitive grants in the areas of workplace improvements; research, education and training; and community-based programs of excellence to assess and expand best practices. The companion House bill H.R. 795 was introduced in February by [U.S. Representative Edolphus "Ed" Towns](#). Both Mikulski and Towns are trained social workers.

"We all came to the profession of social work to make a difference—to bring about positive social change—to better society," says **Elizabeth J. Clark**, PhD, ACSW, MPH, executive director of the [National Association of Social Workers](#). "Through this important legislation, we want to ensure that the next generation of social work students—those who are inspired by the legacies of Dorothy Height, Barbara Mikulski, Whitney Young and Ed Towns—can pursue their dreams while serving their communities."

About Dr. Dorothy Height

Dr. Dorothy Height, President Emerita of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), began her career as a caseworker in the New York City welfare department, and held leadership positions with the YWCA and Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. In 1957, she was named president of NCNW, a position she held until 1997. During her storied career she encouraged presidents to desegregate schools, to support African American families, and to appoint women of all races to positions in government. At the 1963 March on Washington, she was the only woman seated on the dais. Height has received numerous awards and achievements for her contributions, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal. Other noted women leaders, such as Oprah Winfrey, Maya Angelou, Alexis M. Herman, and Hillary Clinton, consider Dr. Height a mentor. She is currently, at age 97, the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the [Leadership Conference on Civil Rights](#), the largest civil rights organization.

..

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), in Washington, DC, is the largest membership organization of professional social workers with 150,000 members. It promotes, develops, and protects the practice of social work and social workers. NASW also seeks to enhance the well being of individuals, families, and communities through its advocacy.

Contact:

Gail Woods Waller

202-336-8236

gwaller@naswdc.org

Elizabeth Franklin

(202) 408-8600 ext. 537

efranklin@naswdc.org