

February 3, 2022

House Committee/ Health, Welfare, and Institutions

Re: HB 353

Dear Honorable Chairman and fellow committee members,


Thank you for the opportunity to speak to HB 353. The National Association of Social Workers Virginia Chapter is the largest professional membership association in the Commonwealth and represents over 15,000 social workers, and over 115,000 professionals within our nation

As professionals with degrees in Social Work and specific training and education to work with families and members of our communities in many capacities, we support HB 353 regarding access to essential medical care for homeless unaccompanied minors. As HB 353 was introduced to amend and reenact 54.1-2969 of the Code of Virginia, NASW-Virginia seeks to address the specific addendum L, which references that school social workers would be allowed to provide consent to an unaccompanied youth.

NASW supports programs that address health disparities resulting from poverty and policies that promote key factors to strengthen young adult health care service delivery systems and include access to behavioral, mental, and physical health evaluation and treatment as appropriate

School social workers are one of the few resources in secondary schools for addressing personal and social problems that inhibit students' ability to learn. School social workers seek to ensure that students are mentally, physically, and emotionally present in the classroom and promote respect and dignity for all students (NASW, 2020).

Social workers in educational settings can identify and work directly with homeless and unaccompanied youth. School social workers provide direct services to youth in schools, which would include advocacy for mental and physical health programs. In addition, our School social worker can develop relationships with youth in their schools and often provide emotional support, especially when a parent or guardian is not present. Youth experiencing homelessness or are unaccompanied, often rely on their educational support network for emotional and physical needs. As such, School social workers support youth in accessing essential medical care. Homeless or unaccompanied youth have the right to essential and routine medical care. As stated prior, we support School social workers to be authorized to provide consent for such services of homeless or unaccompanied minors.



If you have additional questions or need additional information, please contact Debra Riggs, Executive Director at the chapter office.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Respectfully Submitted

Debra A Riggs, Executive Director  
NASW Virginia Chapter