



Testimony Provided by:

***Ron Simon, Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers – PA Chapter
House Labor & Industry Committee Public Hearing on HB 2271, June 5, 2014***

Good morning Chairman Scavello, Chairman Keller and members of this committee. My name is Ron Simon and I serve as the Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers – Pennsylvania Chapter. We are the professional association which represents social workers across the Commonwealth, with nearly 6,000 members statewide. We appreciate being invited to speak with you all today.

I am here today to express our support of House Bill 2271 sponsored by State Representative Pam Snyder. Representative Snyder's bill amends the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act to prohibit employers, employment agencies and labor organizations from discriminating against workers based on marital or familial status. Most of NASW-PA's efforts to pass legislation are confined to bills which will enhance the standing of the social work profession in Pennsylvania; however, we also advocate for bills which advance sound social policies and contribute to social justice. House Bill 2271 certainly meets those criteria.

NASW-PA has an extraordinarily diverse membership which represents a wide variety of viewpoints. However, among the core social work values expressed in the *NASW Code of Ethics* are:

- (1) Social workers respect the value and inherent worth of the person.
- (2) Social workers challenge social injustice.

As a social worker with twenty-five years of diverse field experiences, I can tell you that an essential component to working effectively with individuals and families, whether it be in a free clinic or a private practice office, is treating each individual respectfully and acknowledging the person's inherent worth. If this was an ethic in which other professions adhered, House Bill 2271 would not be necessary.

The second point, once again, is that social workers must challenge social injustice. Other professionals may notice people being treated unfairly and choose not to address the situation. For social workers, this is simply not an option. Our Code of Ethics compels us to challenge injustice and advocate for those whose voices are not being heard. Simply put, without the passage of House Bill 2271, our Commonwealth is tacitly sanctioning discrimination and oppression.

Social workers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, or mental or physical disability. Furthermore, social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, or mental or physical disability.

NASW promotes equal protection under the law, and strongly supports the full implementation of civil rights legislation, including House Bill 2271, and its application to women; to people of color; and to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. And, because we believe that everyone is entitled to equal opportunity — regardless of age, disability, gender, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, or family or marital status — NASW endorses local, state, and federal policies and programs that give all people equal access to the resources, services, and opportunities that they require. House Bill 2271 would ensure such access and protection to individuals regardless of family or marital status.

The final four words to the Pledge of Allegiance- which is recited by members of the House and Senate during every session day- are “...and justice for all.” Passage of House Bill 2271 will finally provide the employment justice that thousands of Pennsylvanians have been seeking for decades. Again, NASW-PA strongly supports this legislation, and looks forward to its consideration and passage in this committee sometime in the near future. Thank you again Chairmen Scavello and Keller for allowing me to testify today.

The National Association of Social Workers is the largest membership organization for professional social workers, serving 150,000. In Pennsylvania alone, NASW-PA represents nearly 6,000 members and works to enhance the professional growth and development of social workers, to create and maintain social work standards, and to advance sound social policies.