SB 1302/HB 1337: Training Professionals to Recognize Child Abuse

**Sponsors:** Senator Harris, Representative Hardaway, **Status:** Senate: Judiciary Committee, House: Civil Justice SC
**Position:** Support. Requires the Department of Children’s Services to develop instructional guidelines for child safety training programs for members of professions that frequently deal with children who may be at risk of abuse; requires certain licensing boards to create child safety training programs; requires certain professionals to complete the appropriate child safety training program prior to license renewal.

**Strengths:**
- According to research (Darkness to Light), education on the warning signs of sexual abuse leads to an increase in reporting suspected abuse.
- Increased reporting leads to increased opportunity for intervention. Intervention can decrease the incidence of adverse childhood experiences (ACE). Each ACE increases the risk for poor physical health, mental health, and employment outcomes. Therefore, intervention can decrease the number of ACEs a child experiences.
- The societal effects of a single incident of childhood sexual abuse are great – It is estimated that a single incident of abuse costs $210,000 over a victim’s lifetime.
- The fiscal impact is estimated to be $670,500 initially in FY17-18, and $644700 in subsequent years. Cost could be offset if just over 3 incidents of abuse were prevented each year.

**Weaknesses:**
- Some of the professions listed among the board of medical examiners do not necessarily work with children. Among the board of medical examiners, the professions that need this training may need to be more strictly defined.
- The training has not yet been created. A standard, evidence based model across all professions is preferable. Mechanism of evaluation is needed.
- Children at the greatest risk for abuse do not regularly access health care. This decreases their chance of being screened for abuse by medical professionals.
- A missed opportunity - the staff of places of worship such as churches, synagogues, mosques, etc. should also be trained. This would be hard to track, however, because they are not licensed.

**NASW Code of Ethics Values:** Competent Service, Social Justice

SB 771/HB 888: Bathroom Bill

**Sponsors:** Senator Beavers, Bailey, Bowling, Green, Representative Pody, Hill T, VanHuss, Sexton J, Rogers, Matheny, Casada, Hill M, Sparks, Moody, Holt, Reedy, Butt, Keisling, Weaver, Byrd, Littleton, Rudd
**Status:** Senate: Education Committee, House: SC Education Administration & Planning Subcommittee
**Position:** Oppose. Requires students in public schools and public institutions of higher education to use restrooms and locker rooms that are assigned to persons of the same sex as that shown on the students' birth certificates.

**Strengths:**
- Bill purports to protect children from different gender predators posing as transgender youths in restrooms, though no incidents of victimization have been documented.

**Weaknesses:**
- Puts federal funding to the state for education in jeopardy, including $1,123,714,400 of K-12 funds and $64,613,400. It puts local jurisdictions in jeopardy of losing their funding as well.
- Opens state to civil lawsuits on grounds of discrimination, human rights violations.
- Corporations have backed out of negotiations with states that have passed similar bills, resulting in lost jobs and economic opportunities (North Carolina, Deutsche Bank, Paypal). Nearly 200 Tennessee businesses have taken a stand against last year’s version of this bill.
- Denies right to self-determination and privacy to vulnerable populations; places transgender youths in danger.
- Because law would require original birth certificate, this bill ignores court-approved changes to legal documents.

**NASW Code of Ethics Values:** Social Justice, Dignity and Worth of the Person, Self Determination
SB 326/HB 380: Prohibits solitary confinement for juveniles in a juvenile detention facility

**Sponsors:** Senator Harris, Representative Love

**Status:** Senate: Judiciary Committee, House: Criminal Justice Subcommittee

**Position:** Support. Tennessee currently does not have limits on use of solitary confinement (SC) of juveniles in detention centers. SC is currently used as for protective and punitive purposes, and leaves juveniles in isolation for 22-24 hours per day.

**Strengths:**
- Juvenile Courts were created to protect children and give them a rehabilitative experience to help them transition back into society. Solitary confinement goes against that completely. US DOJ, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention states “the juvenile justice system...should be rare, fair, and beneficial” to children. The TN Dept. of Children’s Services further acknowledges “many of the [adjudicated delinquents in Tennessee] have been victims of trauma, abuse, and neglect themselves”.
- Harms to children: psychological damage (depression, anxiety, psychosis), increased suicide rates, denial of education, and stunted development.
- Isolation of humans has been well-documented to cause and/or exacerbate severe mental health issues. The effect is even greater in the developing brain of a youth.
- Other states have developed and tested cost effective alternatives including development of graduated sanction grids, use of behavior management techniques, and thorough assessment at intake.
- Eliminates basis for lawsuits as cruel and unusual punishment.
- Broad support: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Texas Correction Officer’s Union, Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators, Annie E. Casey Foundation.

**Weaknesses:**
- Bill does not offer a defined alternative plan of action for dangerous youth.
- Bill does not offer a defined plan of action for you in need of protective housing.

**NASW Code of Ethics Values:** Dignity of Worth of the Person, Importance of Human Relationships

SB 416/HB 679: Exempts taxes on absorbent garment worn by infants and children

**Sponsors:** Senator Lundberg, Representative Crawford

**Status:** Senate: Revenue SC of Finance, Ways & Means Committee, House: Finance, Ways & Means SC

**Position:** Support. Exempts from sales and use tax the gross receipts derived from the sale of diapers for use by children.

**Strengths:**
- Relieves the tax burden on diapers for the single parent(s) struggling to meet the need of their child(ren). Sales tax is a greater burden on families in poverty.
- Benefits all households that has infants and toddlers. National Diaper Bank Network says that one in three U.S. families need financial help buying diapers. Removing the tax could save enough money for the average family to cover the average baby’s bottom with 13 extra diapers a month.
- 23.1% of families with children under 5 in Tennessee live in poverty (US Census)

**Weaknesses:**
- Only benefits families with older children or adults with incontinence or disabilities.
- Decrease State Revenue – Net Impact – $6,825,700.

**NASW Code of Ethics Values:** Social Justice
MENTAL HEALTH PARITY, PACKAGE OF FIVE BILLS
Status: Senate: Commerce and Labor Committee, House: Insurance and Banking SC

SB 835/HB 871: Campaign on mental health and alcoholism or drug dependency parity.
Sponsors: Senator Briggs, Representative Pitts
Position: Support. Requires the department of commerce and insurance to develop a consumer and provider education campaign on mental health and alcoholism or drug dependence parity and to establish entities to support consumers in understanding appeals and complaints processes and in pursuing appeals and complaints.

SB 836/HB 479: Federal and state statutes concerning mental health parity.
Sponsors: Senator Briggs, Representative Clemmons
Position: Support. Requires the Department of Commerce and Insurance to implement and enforce federal and state statutes concerning mental health parity. Mandates the department to issue a report to the general assembly and provide an educational presentation to the general assembly concerning the department's efforts to implement and enforce federal and state statutes concerning mental health parity.

SB 837/HB 480: Report on coverage for mental health treatment.
Sponsors: Senator Briggs, Representative Clemmons
Position: Support. Requires managed care organizations participating in the TennCare program to annually report to the bureau of TennCare certain information regarding treatment of claims for mental health and alcoholism or drug dependence benefits in relation to the requirements of the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008.

SB 838/HB 1245: Annual report concerning mental health substance abuse benefits & claims.
Sponsors: Senator Briggs, Representative Clemmons
Position: Support. Requires every health insurance carrier that issues health benefit plans to submit an annual report concerning mental health substance abuse benefits and claims.

SB 839/HB 1244: Annual report concerning mental health substance abuse benefits & claims.
Sponsors: Senator Briggs, Representative Clemmons
Position: Support. Revises requirements for mental health parity with medical health insurance statutes to require certain demonstrations of parity and reports from insurers.
Strengths:
- This package of bills is thorough and clear in their intent. Creates a clear structure of consistency, accountability, and reporting.
- Provides for same or similar level of coverage of mental health conditions across health insurance systems.
- Increases access to health care for broad populations across the state.
- Absenteeism due to depression alone accounts for $44 billion in lost productivity annually to US employers (CDC, 2015).
- Untreated mental illness often leads to poverty, and subsequent reliance on public resources. Individuals with mental illness, who rely on government programs, cost US taxpayers $160 billion per year (CDC, 2015).

Weaknesses:
- Cost unclear.

NASW Code of Ethics Values: Service, Social Justice