



To: The Honorable Liz Krueger, Senate Chair of Finance; The Honorable J. Gary Pretlow, Assembly Chair of Ways and Means; The Honorable Samra Brouk, Senate Chair of Mental Health; The Honorable Jo Anne Simon, Assembly Chair of Mental Health; and members of the committees.

From: Payment for Placements (P4P) – New York Coalition

Date: February 4, 2026

Re: Testimony in Support of the MSW Paid Field Work Pilot Program (S.7894/A.9379, Salazar/Simon)

We are Olivia Watts, MSW Hunter College Alum, Pilar Bonilla, MSW Hunter College Alum, Anna Schupack, current Hunter MSW student, Maria Talloni-Perlett, current Fordham MSW student, Molly Steinfeld, MSW, NYU Alum, Monique Murray, MSW Lehman College Alum, at Payment for Placements - New York State Coalition. We want to thank Senator Krueger, Senator Pretlow, Senator Brouk, Assemblymember Simon, and Senate and Assembly leadership for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify in support of the listed legislation below for the New York State Executive Budget, Fiscal Year 2026-27.

Payment for Placements is a nationwide movement, with chapters and similar pieces of legislation in California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Illinois, Texas, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Ohio, Minnesota, New Mexico, and more. The Payment for Placements (P4P) – New York Coalition is a statewide movement of students and social work professionals dedicated to ending the practice of degree-required, unpaid labor in social work education. We represent chapters across New York’s leading social work institutions. We are writing today to strongly urge the inclusion of \$12 million in the final budget to fund the Master of Social Work (MSW) Paid Field Work Pilot Program (S.7894/A.9379).

This legislation would provide stipends to more than 5,000 Master of Social Work (MSW) students across New York State who are required to complete intensive unpaid field placements in order to graduate. To earn a Master’s degree in Social Work, students are required to complete a minimum of 900 hours of internship, labor that is essential to the functioning of New York State’s social services and yet is uncompensated.

These unpaid internships create a significant financial barrier to entry into the social work profession, impacting recruitment. It contributes to increased student loan debt,



can delay graduation, and force students to take on additional paid work while attempting to excel in full-time course work. These factors shrink New York's social work pipeline as well as limit diversity in the field. At a time when New York is stepping up to confront challenges in child-care, public safety, public health, behavioral health, homelessness, veteran services, immigration, senior care, and housing, New York cannot afford to lose current and future social workers. Social work is a widespread and multi-faceted profession. We are found at the intersection of all of these issues and many more.

S7894/A9379 is a pilot program of up to \$12 million dollars that will compensate over 5,000 social work students with \$4,500 per year for 450 hours of previously unpaid labor. This is a targeted investment that will reduce attrition, bolster the workforce, and strengthen the state's social service infrastructure.

We urge the Governor, the Senate, the Assembly, and leaders and members of this committee to prioritize the funding for S.7894/A9379 (Salazar/Simon) in the upcoming budget. Tackling the many pressing issues of our beloved State, such as childcare, affordable housing, immigration, public safety, and homelessness, starts by addressing the social work workforce. Addressing the social work shortage begins with recognizing that social work labor—even at the student level—has value. Paying social work student interns is imperative to their wellbeing, and is a common-sense, smart return on investment for New York state's future.

Thank you for your leadership, for considering the collective voice of our coalition, and for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with Governor Hochul, Senator Krueger, Senator Pretlow, Senator Brouk, Assemblymember Simon, and Senate and Assembly to make such a robust social work workforce a strong reality.

Respectfully submitted by the P4P-NY Coalition:

Olivia M. Watts, MSW, Hunter College
Pilar O. Bonilla, MSW, Hunter College
Anna Schupack, current Hunter MSW student
Maria Talloni-Perlett, current Fordham MSW student
Molly Steinfeld, MSW, NYU
Monique Murray, MSW, Lehman College

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S.7894 / A.9379

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK PAID FIELD WORK PILOT PROGRAM

A Strategic Investment to Grow New York's Social Work Workforce

THE PROBLEM: THE HIGH COST OF WORKFORCE SHORTAGES

New York's reliance on degree-required internships for social workers creates significant and escalating economic liabilities for the state.



- **Barriers to Entry:** The current model forces students to work for free while accumulating **an average of \$60,000 in debt.** This unsustainable barrier restricts the labor pool for a high-demand sector.



- **Critical Workforce Gaps:** With **48 of 62 counties facing mental health service shortages,** unmet needs result in higher public expenditures on costly crisis interventions, emergency healthcare, and the justice system, acting as a direct drag on the state's economy.

THE SOLUTION:

A HIGH-RETURN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK

S.7894/A.9379 is a smart investment that improves access to care while strengthening our local economy. By providing a **\$4,500 stipend** to secure a one-year work commitment from new social workers, this bill will:



Generate Cross-Sector Savings

By investing in preventative care, the state reduces long-term demand for more expensive, crisis-driven services in healthcare, housing, and public safety.



Drive Employment & Workforce Retention

Addresses critical labor shortages and reduces the high costs associated with employee turnover, stabilizing a vital state industry.



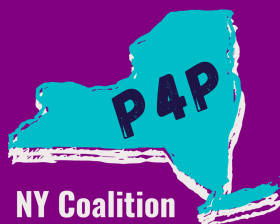
Stimulate Local Economies

Brings stable, professional jobs to communities across the state, increasing the local tax base and boosting consumer spending.



Enhance Data-Driven Policy

Empowers OMH to collect invaluable data on workforce trends and program ROI to guide future economic and workforce development strategies.



 www.payment4placements.org



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PAYMENT FOR PLACEMENTS (P4P)

New York Coalition



WHO
ARE
WE?

Payment for Placements  (P4P) is a national movement, made up of students and alum, dedicated to ending the practice of mandatory unpaid internships. The P4P-NY Coalition is made up of several P4P chapters across New York State. We believe fair compensation is essential to making social work education accessible, diversifying the profession, and addressing critical workforce shortages. **We advocate for legislative solutions to secure funding for placements, ensuring a stronger future for social services in New York.** 

FUNDING CONTEXT EXAMPLES


 States all over the country, including  [Illinois](#)  [Massachusetts](#)  [Michigan](#)  [Minnesota](#)  [New Mexico](#)  [Ohio](#) [Oregon](#) [Pennsylvania](#) and [Texas](#) have introduced bills to provide state funding for social work interns.

 Funding Examples in Other Professions:

[Physician Shortage Solution](#) | [Teaching Shortage Solution - Maryland](#)

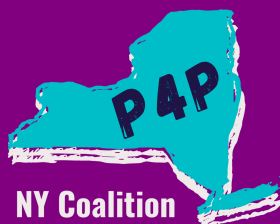
OUR SUPPORTERS

 [Council on Social Work Education \(CSWE\)](#)

 [National Association of Social Workers - New York \(NASW-NY\)](#)

 [National Association of Social Workers \(NASW\)](#)

CONTACT US



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