Integrating Social Workers Across Health Care Settings Act (H.R. 4185)

Modernizing Medicare to Support Team-Based Care

Medicare's definition of clinical social worker services hasn't been updated since 1989 — and it's now limiting patient access to coordinated, whole-person care.

The Problem

In 1989, Congress recognized clinical social workers as independent Medicare providers — but limited billable services to the **diagnosis and treatment of mental illness only.**

- Today, clinical social workers (CSWs) are trained and licensed to address the medical, behavioral, and social factors that affect health. They help patients navigate care, manage chronic conditions, plan for safe discharge, and connect with community resources.
- Medicare's outdated definition blocks CSWs from billing directly for this essential, non-mental-health work, even though they are trained, licensed, and already providing it.

Why It Matters

- Without direct reimbursement, clinics and health systems absorb the cost for CSW staff or rely on limited grant funding to keep them.
- CSWs support whole-person, team-based care for Medicare beneficiaries.
- Improves access to care coordination and support for patients with complex medical, social, and mental health needs.
- **Rural and underserved communities are hit hardest** — CSWs help address social and logistical barriers to care in communities where clinics and health systems have the least capacity to absorb costs Medicare won't reimburse.

The Fix: H.R. 4185

The Integrating Social Workers Across Health Care Settings Act (H.R. 4185), introduced by Representatives Jen Kiggans (R-VA), Danny Davis (D-IL), and Brittany Pettersen (D-CO), **is a bipartisan bill that modernizes Medicare policy by:**

- Removing outdated language that limits CSW services to the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness.
- Allowing CSWs to use Medicare's "incident to" billing framework, consistent with other provider types.

In plain terms: "incident to" billing allows Medicare reimbursement for services delivered by members of a care team under appropriate supervision of the treating provider. It is a longstanding mechanism that supports team-based care.

- CSWs currently supervise and guide patient care provided by case managers, community health workers, and patient care navigators; however, they are excluded from "incident to" billing.

Congress has already established this precedent for Clinical psychologists, who are permitted to use "incident to" billing and practice under state licensure. **H.R. 4185 provides similar authority for clinical social workers.**

CSWs do not replace physicians or other medical practitioners - they work as part of the care team.

For example, when a patient needs help with transportation and medication affordability - the CSW conducts an assessment and addresses barriers affecting the patient's health by providing supportive counseling and connecting them with appropriate clinical and community supports.

H.R. 4185 allows Medicare to reimburse this work when it is provided within a CSW's existing scope of practice.

OUR ASK

Please consider cosponsoring H.R. 4185, the Integrating Social Workers Across Health Care Settings Act. This legislation updates outdated Medicare policy to reimburse CSWs for services they already provide, strengthening care teams and improving access to whole-person care for Medicare beneficiaries, especially in rural and underserved communities.

Coalition for Social Work and Health, 2026
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ENDORSING ORGANIZATIONS FOR H.R. 4185

ORGANIZATION
American Nephrology Nurses Association
American Society of Nephrology
American Society on Aging
Association of Oncology Social Workers
Camden Coalition
Clinical Social Work Association
Coalition to Transform Advanced Care (C-TAC)
Coalition for Social Work and Health
Council on Social Work Education
CJE SeniorLife (CJE)
Crossroads4Hope, A Network of Cancer Support
Eldercare Workforce Alliance
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Association of Social Workers
National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
New Jersey Palliative Care Advance Practice Consortium
Partners in Care Foundation
Region IV Area Agency on Aging
Rush University Medical Center
Social Work Hospice and Palliative Care Network (SWHPN)
Society for Social Work Leadership in Health Care
Waitlist Zero
YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee