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April 11, 2022

Dear Colleagues:

The Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) is scheduled to hold its 2023 professional conference in Phoenix, Arizona. The SSWR Board made this decision in 2019. We have recently become aware that some policymakers in this state are currently promoting state legislation antithetical to the beliefs, principles, and values central to our profession. Sadly, this is not unique to Arizona. During the April meeting of the board of directors of SSWR we began to discuss how to best address the current policy environment that promotes divisiveness, misinformation, and hatred toward marginalized groups.

Potential effective actions require a robust scholarly conference with inclusive participation that can strengthen our message in Phoenix. As the board discussed specific actions to take, we encourage members to submit abstracts for the upcoming conference.

It is imperative we mobilize in a manner such that we network across professional organizations and societies in order to affect the economic components of states which seek our presence through conference events. Future decisions to hold conferences within the concomitant states could provide the calculus and platforms for ground roots change efforts.

This situation can provide an opportunity for SSWR to speak out forcefully against legislation which promotes further divisiveness in an already fractured nation. Our membership body and leadership can set an example that bigotry is unacceptable in any form, create meaningful alliances with other professional organizations to stand against such bigotry and still provide a space of learning and scholarly thought for our profession. We can accomplish this offering a conference program, with numerous presentations by our members, that offers a better informed and humane view on issues of policy.

As we develop a more specific plan for possibilities of responding at the 2023 conference and future conferences, we will communicate with the membership as well as ask you to communicate with the SSWR board. Please feel free to contact those below with your ideas and suggestions.

Mary Collins
Vice-President, SSWR

David B. Miller
Chair, Communications Committee, SSWR

Jennifer Lewis
Executive Director, SSWR