Assignment 1: Letter to an Elected Official (due February 2/6)

Please choose a social work/social welfare related bill that is currently being discussed at the local, state, or national level. Write to an elected official about that bill—either advocating for or against a vote.

Sample issues from the past:
- Federal laws requiring mental health parity in insurance plans.
- A state law that would require health insurance coverage for autism spectrum disorders.
- A federal law—Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) reauthorization.

Please write a letter—no longer than one page—to the appropriate elected official, using the structure outlined below.

Objectives of the assignment

In writing this paper, students will:
- Practice advocating for an issue;
- Become more aware of present day social welfare, social work, and social justice issues;
- Become familiar with the various levels of government and the elected officials at each level;
- Become aware of different sides of an issue;
- Increase their skills and ability to become an active citizen and advocate; and
- Further develop analytical and writing skills.

Procedure/Structure for Writing the Letter:

1. Choose a piece of legislation and determine if you are advocating for or against it.
2. Research the bill in order to support your argument(s).
3. Determine the correct elected official (e.g., city council, county board, school board, state legislator, Congressional representative) to contact about this bill. This will be the elected official who will be voting on this particular piece of legislation. You may have to do a web search to determine who that person is. Address your letter to your actual elected official in the jurisdiction where you are registered to vote. If you are a foreign student, you may want to use an Illinois elected official or you may choose an issue in your own country and address the proper official in your country.
4. Consider the counter argument(s) to your position. This must be addressed in your letter. Please see example in the attached sample letter.
5. Please write the letter using the format below:
   - Be concise, informed, and polite (do not be rude or threatening);
   - Use your own words;
   - Be brief. Keep your letter to one page with a few paragraphs; State your purpose in the first paragraph;
   - Cite the bill, policy, or budget item by name. State the number of the bill, if you know it;
   - Say whether you support or oppose the issue and briefly why;
   - Be factual and speak from your own knowledge or experience;
   - Address a counterargument;
   - State what you would like to see happen;
   - Ask for the official’s stand on the issue; and
   - Include your full name and address. Your address will indicate whether you are a constituent. Elected officials pay more attention to letters from their own constituents.