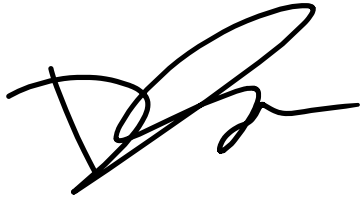


There is no doubt that social workers everywhere have survived, suffered, and thrived through strife in these recent years and in the history of our great profession. When I joined NASW-CA a few years ago as the Chapter Executive Director, I held close to me the stories of my own lived experiences in the nexus of my own identities, my frustrations with systems that continue to fail us, the work that continues to under-resource us, and the dire need to elevate those who dedicate their life's work to bettering our world. I was and continue to be inspired by each of you in the work, those in my communities and other marginalized groups, and knew that whatever efforts I could commit to advancing the well-being of social workers was a worthy cause. I am grateful to have served you, to have advocated to ensure recognition and investments of our workforce, and for the overall sustainability and wellness of those communities we serve. It is with mixed sentiment that I share that I will be transitioning out of my role with NASW-CA to create space for other great social workers to share in leadership and serve in this wonderfully humbling role. I will be returning to my heart's work in gender-based violence issues.

In just short of three years, we have truly radically altered opportunities, demanded positive change, and exemplified the heart of social work – none of this would have been possible without chapter staff, volunteer leadership, and each of you. We launched the Unity Project that, for the first time ever in the history of the state, convenes social work groups in California to advance agendas, collaborate, and build movement in our love for our communities. We won tremendous advocacy efforts to alter the ways in which justice is achieved in the courts, the ways in which licensing barriers could be removed, and enabled access points for free education in social work programs for individuals of color and those representing marginalized identities. We launched the Social Workers Movement, which insisted on the necessity of social work voices being at ALL decision-making tables to assure meaningful wages, trauma-informed workspaces, and relevant service models being embedded in all structures of public and private systems of care. We launched the statewide consortium for social work policy instructors, we enhanced member benefits, we launched the BIPOC membership scholarship, we strengthened the pipeline for those with lived experiences with systems to enter our workforce, we transformed our capacity building programs, raised our own capacity to augment chapter funding streams to offset burden away from social workers needing to pay membership dues, and so so much more. Most importantly, we leaned on your voices to inform and impact the change that was needed. We learned to lead in servanthip and with humility. We owned our positions of privilege, and made space for all to be involved in decision-making spaces.

I've had the honor of crossing paths and building community with so many inspiring social workers and allies during this time. Thank you for allowing me to serve, and thank you for the diligence and love you commit in your daily lives. Please feel free to connect with me on [LinkedIn](#) to stay connected and learn where I will journey next! The NASW-CA Chapter Search Committee, led by Chapter Board President Dr. Victor Manalo, will be organizing the search for the next leader to take the reins. You can find the [job announcement here](#). Please feel free to reach out to us with any questions or needs during this time of transition.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'DS' with a stylized flourish.

Deborah Son, MSW