

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 794
Finance

(Senator West)

State Board of Social Work Examiners – Continuing Education Programs –
Approval of Authorized Sponsors

This bill requires the State Board of Social Work Examiners (BSWE) to establish a process to review and approve a person seeking to become an authorized sponsor of continuing education programs for social workers renewing a license. The process must include at least one pathway for approval that does not require an applicant to have the approval of a national or regional organization to be approved as an authorized sponsor. BSWE must adopt regulations regarding the review and approval process.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: BSWE can promulgate regulations using existing budgeted resources. To the extent additional staff are needed to approve authorized sponsors, special fund expenditures increase beginning as early as FY 2025, as discussed below. Special fund revenues increase by an indeterminate amount beginning as early as FY 2025 due to sponsor approval fees.

Local Effect: The bill does not directly affect local government operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Generally, an individual must be licensed by BSWE to practice social work in the State. In Maryland, there are four social work license categories, distinguished by specific education and/or training requirements, including licensed bachelor social worker (LBSW), licensed master social worker, licensed certified social worker, and licensed

certified social worker-clinical. The board no longer issues new LCSW licenses but does renew those licenses issued prior to December 31, 2023.

Licensure Requirements

In general, to obtain a license, an applicant must (1) submit a written application on a board-prescribed form; (2) be at least 18 years old; (3) be of good moral character; (4) successfully pass required examinations pertinent to the license sought; (5) pay any applicable fees; (6) complete a criminal history records check; and (7) if required, complete a mental or physical examination by a board-appointed health care practitioner. Each license expires every two years, after which the licensee must pay a renewal fee, submit a renewal application, submit satisfactory evidence of compliance with any continuing education requirements, and otherwise be entitled to be licensed.

Continuing Education

Under Maryland regulations (COMAR [10.42.06.03](#)), BSWE must renew a license for an additional two-year period if the social worker (1) completes 40 (30 for LBSW) specified continuing education units within the renewal period; (2) submits an application attesting to the completion of the required continuing education units in approved programs; and (3) completes the required continuing education units within a two-year period. The social worker must complete continuing education units that foster improvement, advancement, and extension of the social worker's professional skill, knowledge, and competence.

Authorized Sponsors

Maryland regulations (COMAR [10.42.06.05](#)) specify that authorized sponsors of continuing education programs must (1) meet specified objectives; (2) include specified information in the program announcement, flyer, or brochure; (3) ensure that a program certificate or letter of completion is provided on official letterhead and includes, among other things, the name of the social worker, the date of the program, the number of continuing education units awarded, and information regarding the sponsor; and (4) maintain documentation of continuing education activity for four years.

The following authorized sponsors of continuing education programs are approved under Maryland regulations (COMAR 10.42.06.05):

- national, regional, or State accredited academic institutions offering academic courses or programs recognized as acceptable social work curriculum subject areas by the Council on Social Work Education;
- national, regional, or State social work associations including, but not limited to, social work licensing boards, the Association of Social Work Boards, the National

Association of Social Workers, and non-social-work professional membership organizations providing programs that are relevant to the professional development of social workers; and

- international social work associations and accredited academic institutions including, but not limited to, social work licensing boards which provide programs that foster improvement, advancement, and extension of the social worker's professional skill, knowledge, and competence, and non-social-work organizations providing programs that are relevant to the professional development of social workers.

Under Maryland regulations (COMAR [10.42.05.02](#)), the application fee for authorization to sponsor continuing education programs is \$200, and the program approval fee is \$100. Programs specified in COMAR 10.42.06.05 are not required to pay the application or program renewal fees.

On November 17, 2023, the Secretary of Health repealed regulations under COMAR 10.42.06.05 (effective December 11, 2023) that outlined a process to authorize individuals and organizations not currently designated as an authorized sponsor of continuing education in regulations. The process required individuals to submit an application at least 45 days before conducting the sponsor's first program and pay the required fee. Provisional sponsors received authorization upon approval.

State Fiscal Effect: The bill requires BSWE to establish a process to review and approve a person seeking to become an authorized sponsor of continuing education programs. The board advises that, although previous regulations for the authorized sponsor approval process were not repealed until December 2023, the board has not approved authorized sponsors since May 2020 due to limited staff resources.

It is unclear how many individuals may seek authorization as a sponsor of continuing education programs for social workers under the bill. To the extent that the number of authorized sponsor applications received by the board cannot be absorbed within existing staff resources, BSWE special fund expenditures increase by an indeterminate amount beginning as early as fiscal 2025 for additional staff to accept applications and manage the authorized sponsor program required under the bill.

Per current regulations (COMAR [10.42.05.02](#)), the application fee for an authorized sponsor is \$200 and the program approval fee is \$100. Therefore, special fund revenues increase by \$300, beginning as early as fiscal 2025, for each authorized sponsor approved by the board. It is unclear how many individuals will apply to be an authorized sponsor or be approved by BSWE under the bill.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: HB 1120 (Delegate Woods, *et al.*) - Health and Government Operations.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

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