

January 23, 2023

House Bill 103

State Board of Social Work Examiners - Temporary License to Practice Social Work

House Health and Government Operations

Position: FAVORABLE

I am Chloe Bernardi, President/CEO of Hearts and Homes for Youth and public policy co-chair of The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) which is an association of private child caring organizations providing foster care, group homes, and other services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. The members of MARFY represent providers who serve Maryland's children who are most vulnerable and are in out of home placements due to abuse, neglect or severe mental health, and medical needs. Hearts and Homes for Youth provides residential homes, treatment foster care, and independent living programs for pregnant and parenting teen moms throughout Maryland and have served over 41,000 young people since 1964. I have been in the field since 1997 and am an LCSW-C Supervisor.

There was a shortage of social workers entering child welfare prior to the pandemic and the work force crisis has been magnified by COVID 19 and has a detrimental impact on Maryland's families and our community. Without being able to fill our social worker positions and in a timely manner, we are unable to accept youth into our programs to capacity which means young people who don't have placement are living in hotels or in DSS offices. This bill offers a tool, should it be needed, to provide temporary licenses to social workers waiting to take their exam.

This bill provides an avenue for graduates who have completed their master's level social work educational requirements and internships to begin working while they wait for a test date, if one is not readily available. They are supervised by LCSW-C, covered under an agency's liability insurance and are still required to take the exam. The option to utilize this resource does not compromise safety or the integrity of being a social worker and other professions in health care have similar structures.



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We are in a workforce crisis and need to eliminate barriers to filling our vacant social work positions so that we can adequately serve the youth and families in the child welfare system. It is for these reasons; I politely ask for a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 103. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chloe Bernardi".

Chloe Bernardi, LCSW-C, LICSW

President/CEO

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