

Wes Moore
Governor



Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor

**GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**

(letterhead)

**SB 871 Social Workers - Licensure Examination - Moratorium and Workgroup
SB 145 State Board of Social Work Examiners - Conditional and Temporary Licenses to
Practice Social Work**

**MARYLAND GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
ACTING DIRECTOR KATE BREEN**

HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE COMMITTEE

**Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair**

March 24, 2023

Bill summaries:

SB 145

“Authorizing the State Board of Social Work Examiners to issue a conditional license to practice social work to an applicant who, except for passing a required examination, has met the appropriate education and experience requirements for a certain license if the required examination was unavailable to the applicant for a period of at least 15 business days; authorizing the Board to issue a temporary license to practice social work to certain applicants who have met certain requirements for certain licenses; etc.”

SB 871

“Continuing the State Board of Social Work Examiners in accordance with the provisions of the Maryland Program Evaluation Act (sunset law) by extending to July 1, 2025, the statutory and regulatory authority of the Board; establishing a certain workgroup to identify alternatives to examination requirements for a master social worker license, a certified social worker license, or a certified social worker-clinical license and develop recommendations for a certain assessment method to replace a certain examination requirement; etc.”

The Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the subject matter expert on Deaf and hard of hearing people submits this letter to explain the impact of negative consequences and

systematic racism for both deaf and hard of hearing professionals and consumers, especially those who are children.

Dr. Joseph Hill, a Black Deaf practitioner wrote: “These factors, such as limited access to language and communication, reduced social opportunities, and negative attitudes and biases, contribute to the underrepresentation of qualified and experienced black deaf professionals that can serve as role models for black deaf children and adults¹” This aligns with this article published more than 10 years ago in the *Journal of Social Work in Disability & Rehabilitation*². “Deaf and Hard of Hearing Social Workers Accessing Their Profession: A Call to Action” written by Deaf social work practitioners and professors. The journal abstract states that “Culturally sensitive and accessible services for deaf and hard of hearing people can often best be provided by social workers who are themselves deaf and hard of hearing, who have specialized language and communication skills, as well as unique cultural knowledge of this population at risk. Yet, deaf and hard of hearing graduates of social work education programs routinely experience difficulties accessing the profession”

A case study report about both Deaf professionals and children in behavioral health. In Massachusetts, Walden Community Services provide Therapeutic Mentoring (TM) or Therapeutic Training and Support (TTS). The two social workers wrote in a publication released in July 2020³ “Deaf BIPOC have historically lacked access to information (information controlled by white Deaf people), been deprived of equal access to education and language, been left out of outreach efforts by social services and faced scores of systemic racism in health care access, insurance, health care information, general community information and the like.” The authors presented three case studies to support the practice of BIPOC youths mentored by people who looked like them, wrote that their purpose is to “ensure all families and youth of color have professionals of color as providers and mentors. The Governor’s Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing feel it is not only culturally competent, but should be considered a “best practice” as well.

¹ “Reflections on Black History Month”, National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Education, February 4, 2020 <https://nationaldeafcenter.org/news-items/reflections-black-history-month-dr-joseph-hill/>

² “Deaf and Hard of Hearing Social Workers Accessing Their Profession: A Call to Action”, A Journal of Social Work in Disability & Rehabilitation September 2010.

³ “Deaf BIPOC: Unpacking the Needs in the Community” The Learning Center for the Deaf, News. July 6, 2020 [https://www.tlcdeaf.org/about/news/deaf-bipoc-unpacking-needs-community#:~:text=When%20you%20research%20the%20Deaf,the%20Deaf%20Community%20\(BIPOC\).](https://www.tlcdeaf.org/about/news/deaf-bipoc-unpacking-needs-community#:~:text=When%20you%20research%20the%20Deaf,the%20Deaf%20Community%20(BIPOC).)