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February 9, 2023

House Bill 103

**State Board of Social Work Examiners - Temporary License to Practice Social Work
House Health & Government Operations Committee**

Position: FAVORABLE

I am Robert Basler, Associate Vice President of Arrow Child and Family ministries and public policy co-chair of The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) 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 most vulnerable children who are in out of home placements due to abuse, neglect or severe mental health, and medical needs. Arrow provides residential, treatment foster care, special education and community behavioral health services to youth and families who live throughout Maryland.

Our program uses licensed social workers to provide case management and clinical services in all of our programs. There is a current shortage of licensed social workers throughout our State. It is not uncommon for Arrow to have social work positions go unfilled for months. This experience is shared by MARFY members. This shortage has significant negative effects on providers and the youth and families they serve.

The primary impact is the reduction in the number of clients served. Our programs have regulatory and best practice limits on the caseload size of social workers. The inability to fill positions results in fewer youth receiving services. In a time when we have a crisis in placement options for foster youth and a growing youth mental health crisis, we need common sense solutions to ensure that qualified social workers are available to work.

House Bill 103 would remove one barrier to social workers being able to work. In the event of barriers to timely access to social work licensing exams, candidates who are otherwise qualified to perform social work duties could do so under a certified supervisor. Other professions have similar structures, and it works. There is some risk of candidates not passing the exam and no longer being able to work as a social worker, but given pass rates for the test, this is a limited risk.

We are in a social work workforce crisis. This bill helps alleviate one barrier to social workers entering the workforce and helping meet a growing need. It is for these reasons, I politely ask for a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 103. Thank you.

For more information call or email:

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