



March 30, 2023

Senate Bill 145

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

Position: SUPPORT

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. We operate group homes, treatment foster care programs and independent living programs, primarily serving the foster care population as well as a juvenile services population.

If passed, this emergency bill authorizes the State Board of Social Work Examiners to issue a conditional license or a temporary license to practice bachelor social work or master social work to an applicant who, except for passing the required examination, has met the appropriate education and experience requirements for licensure. Unless the board agrees to accept the surrender of a license, the holder of a conditional or temporary license may not surrender the license or allow the license to lapse while the licensee is under investigation or while charges are pending against them.

Private providers experienced significant obstacles prior to COVID-19 as it pertained to hiring social workers due to an identified national shortage; and this challenge has become more compounded as a result of the pandemic in combination with other unforeseen events such as malware attacks on State websites and administrative delays in processing applications. The delay in a graduate's ability to sit for their exam to obtain their licensure considerably impedes employer's capacity to offer employment subsequently hindering clinical services that our youth, families, and communities require. Due to the current unprecedented hindrances, it took many agencies over 10 months to fill social worker positions in some group homes over the past two-years.

As worker challenges continue, the state of our current mental health needs as it pertains to caring for our most vulnerable populations far exceeds anything MARFY members have ever witnessed. We strongly advocate for modifications to current practices be considered to align with our existing barriers for the mental well-being and safety of our youth, families, and communities. Allowing this bill to pass would provide an opportunity to amend the current statutes to meet the rising needs of our community.

It is for these reasons we politely ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 145.

For more information call or email:

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