

March 28, 2023

**To:** Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

**From:** Dr. Samantha Fuld, DSW, MSW, LCSW-C, Clinical Assistant Professor, University of Maryland School of Social Work.

**Re:** SB0871 Social Workers - Sunset Extension, Notification of Complete Application, and Workgroup on Social Worker Examination Requirements for Licensure

SB0145 State Board of Social Work Examiners - Conditional and Temporary Licenses to Practice Social Work

**Position: Favorable**

I am a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland School of Social Work and a proud resident of Maryland (District 46). In this testimony I am speaking as an individual and NOT on behalf of my employer. However, I do have experience teaching hundreds of MSW students who are preparing for licensure and service as social workers in Maryland.

ASWB exam data released in August 2022, and what we know overwhelmingly about standardized testing (which has recently led some universities to drop standardized testing requirements as part of admissions criteria), demonstrates that the licensing exams required to enter the social work profession disproportionately keep people who are marginalized based on race, native language, disability, etc. from entering the profession. This is at a time when social workers are needed more than ever, particularly social workers whose identities represent those who are receiving services in the community. This is harmful to those individuals who have to spend additional money and time re-taking the exam or shifting their professional aspirations and who experience numerous unjust disadvantages due to systemic bias. It is also harmful to Marylanders who need critical clinical services provided by licensed social workers.

I support a favorable vote on SB0871 and S0145.

In addition to a **favorable vote**, I strongly support the following amendments:

**SB0871**

***Reinstatement of the 1-year moratorium on all social work licensing exams.*** While a workgroup identifies long-term solutions, it is hurting both our social workers and our community to continue to force students to take an exam that is ineffective and demonstrated by research to be biased toward white, neurotypical, English-speaking students. Students graduating from an accredited social work program with the appropriate clinical courses should be allowed to obtain a license and practice as social workers while a more equitable solution to the current exam is researched and explored by the workgroup.

**Adjust language in the workgroup, per request by the Deaf and hard of hearing community**, from “a representative of Gallaudet University” to “A social worker designated by the Maryland Association of the Deaf who is familiar with the licensing process for deaf and hard of hearing social workers.” A representative from Gallaudet does not ensure that the representative is Deaf or understands the exam issue from the Deaf perspective.

#### **SB0145**

**Change “The BSWE may...” to “The BSWE shall...”** The BSWE has historically not addressed disparities in social work licensing and opposed temporary licensing. The shift from “may” to “shall” ensures the Board of Social Work Examiners (BSWE) grants temporary licensure to eligible candidates.

**Reinstate 2-year temporary license option for LCSW-Cs.** Temporary licensure for LCSW-C is currently amended out of SB0145. Data from the ASWB indicates that the LCSW-C exam is just as biased as the LBSW and LMSW exam. It is imperative that we include LCSW-Cs as possible candidates for temporary licensure. Many are ready to advance in our field, which would immensely help the state provide access to mental health services that are so needed and are unable to do so because of the barrier of the current biased exam.

Respectfully,  
Samantha Fuld