



February 9, 2023

House Bill 103

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

Position: SUPPORT

Adoptions Together, a Maryland Licensed Child Placement agency is a 501c3 nonprofit that creates safety and security for youth and families throughout our state supports this bill. Each year our education, training, counseling, family finding, and child placement programs impact the lives of approximately 2500 Maryland residents. We employ a diverse staff of 35 full-time professionals including licensed social workers, contract with 25 licensed social workers, and serve as a field placement site for up to 7 social work students per year. We have been operating in the State of Maryland since 1990.

As a professional social worker, I believe licensing is critical to ensure a consistent standard of practice. The criteria and ability to obtain a license should be clear, accessible, and consistent. Unfortunately, due to many factors, the process towards obtaining a license is laden with barriers and hiring social workers is the most difficult we have experienced in 32 years of practice.

This testimony requests that you support House Bill 103, a bill that would make the path to licensure more consistent with the capacity of the licensing body to provide the necessary oversight. This bill would authorize the State Board of Social Work Examiners to issue a temporary license to an applicant who, except for passing the required examination, has otherwise completed the appropriate education and experience required for a license to practice bachelor social work or master social work. The board may issue a temporary license if a required examination is unavailable to an applicant for a period of at least seven days. A temporary license is valid until 90 days after the examination becomes readily available to the applicant. A temporary license authorizes the holder to practice bachelor social work or master social work in the State only under the supervision of a board approved supervisor while the temporary license is effective.

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. **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.**

Post pandemic, social workers are in short supply and are desperately needed. Pandemic-related stress has affected everyone, including individuals in the helping professions such as our staff. Designated as essential workers, social workers have continued reporting to work. The COVID crisis has exacerbated burnout, compassion fatigue, and secondary trauma, all things that affect social workers even in non-pandemic times. **We ask that you please support House Bill 103 to create more capacity for social workers to practice until the licensing exam can be given in a timely way.** Thank you.

Janice Goldwater, LCSW-C CEO Adoptions Together

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