

February 1, 2024

To: Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Will Doyle, LICSW

Re: HB0034 Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact

Position: Favorable with Amendments

Good Afternoon Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

I have been a Maryland resident since 2010. I have been a licensed social worker since 2008 and a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker in Washington, DC since 2013. I have worked in homeless services in Washington, DC since 2006.

I support **HB0034 with Amendments**. I urge you to consider this legislation in light of the extensive testimony you heard last year regarding the ASWB exams and decisions you made in the 2023 legislative session. Despite recognizing the extreme bias in the ASWB exams and the need for major reform in social work licensure, this Committee was not willing to implement any reforms last year. Instead you tasked the Workgroup on Social Worker Requirements for Licensure to consider all elements of social work licensure, including the use of the ASWB exams. The Workgroup started late and was not able to provide the reports due September 1st and December 1st 2023. As a result, you are delayed by a year in addressing the harm that the ASWB exams are inflicting on those impacted by the barrier of the bachelors and masters exams.

Given the present situation, it seems premature to consider the Compact legislation at this time, as it is based on individuals passing a Qualifying National Exam. At the present time and for the foreseeable future, the ASWB exams are the only such option. However, you delegated the task of reviewing the ASWB exams to the Workgroup, but their work is not yet complete. If you believe in the legislation you passed last year, consideration of the Social Work Licensure Compact should be a task of the Workgroup.

You will hear arguments for the Compact that include:

- Addressing mental health workforce shortages by increasing the availability of clinicians to care for vulnerable Maryland residents amidst the mental health crisis
- Removing barriers to social work licensure for military personnel and spouses when relocating

If these benefits of the Compact compel you to move forward with it this legislative session, I urge you to increase those same benefits by amending the legislation to include the following:

- Permanent removal of the ASWB exams for both the bachelors and masters social work licenses without the use of an alternative assessment or any additional requirements

I urge the Committee to consider the full extent of reform needed in Maryland's social work licensure and the responsibilities of the Workgroup you created.

Sincerely,

Will Doyle, LICSW
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District 21