

**Testimony in Support with Amendments to Senate Bill 167
State Board of Social Work Examiners—Temporary License to Practice
Social Work**

**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
January 26, 2021
1:00 pm**

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Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association is in support, with amendments, of Senate Bill 167, legislation that 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, master social work, certified social work, or certified social work-clinical.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

The immeasurable adverse impacts, either instigated by or further exacerbated by the COVID-19 global pandemic, present educators at all levels with extraordinary challenges. Not only must we diagnose and remediate any academic learning loss experienced by our students during this extended period of quarantine and virtual learning, but we must also address the untold yet growing trauma, mental, and behavioral health-related challenges. As we move toward re-opening schools for in-person instruction and given the ongoing personnel, resource, and support challenges facing our schools and districts, it stands to reason that previously stretched supports will be even more threadbare and hard to come by in the go forward. Currently Maryland does not have a sufficient enough mental and behavioral support personnel pipeline to come remotely close to the professionally

recommended student to staff ratios let alone the number of staff required to meet the pandemic-related needs we face. As such, any efforts to ensure that we can deploy as many trained behavioral and mental health professionals in our schools as we begin our transition from virtual to in-person learning is critically important. We believe this legislation is a helpful step toward the overall goal.

We respectfully ask that two related considerations be taken in relation to this legislation.

1. We would ask that aspiring social workers be allowed to count their service under this temporary license toward their clinical requirements for the degree qualifications. Since this license requires that those holding a temporary license work under the supervision of a licensed social worker, we believe that allowing those who have not yet met their residency requirements be given the opportunity to do so under the provisions of this temporary status.
2. We would ask that temporary licensure consideration also be extended (if and where applicable) to similar school-based mental and behavioral health personnel, such as school guidance counselors and school psychologists. Currently, there is a classification for Psychometrists—those assisting certificated school psychologists— under COMAR 13.12.03.07. Psychometrists are required to work under the professional supervision of a certificated school psychologist. We believe that this model should be replicated and applied to other school-based mental and behavioral health personnel as it, too, would help increase the number of student support personnel during this critical time.

We believe these considerations would strengthen the overall goal of ensuring our students and educators have the supports they need in order to adequately respond to our current pandemic-related academic, mental, and behavioral health needs.

We ask the committee to issue a Favorable Report including the above referenced considerations to Senate Bill 167.