



Testimony before the House Health and Government Operations Committee

****Support****

SB 5 – Public Health – Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health

February 2, 2021

Maryland’s Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-MD), which represents professional social workers across the state, supports SB 5 – Public Health – Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities. This bill requires implicit bias training of all licensed health care professionals when they renew their licenses.

Normally we oppose this sort of legislation, because beyond Ethics training it is hard to say that there is any one topic which all health care professionals need and we don’t like to limit the choices that our professionals have to choose from to make up their bi-annual requirement of 40 CEUs. However, it has become painfully clear that racism is a serious problem in our country and that it is structural and imbedded in all of our professions and institutions. Therefore, last year after a good deal of racial unrest in our country the “Social Workers Unraveling Racism” (SWUR) Committee of our Chapter circulated a petition which was subsequently sent to the Board of Social Work Examiners (BSWE) with over 400 signatures. The petition read as follows:

“Petition to Maryland Board of Social Workers Examiners to Add a Requirement for 3 Category 1 CEUs in Anti-racism for Bi-annual Licensure Renewal.

Statement of Intent: We the undersigned licensed Maryland social workers believe that it is important that members of our profession be a part of the solution when it comes to issues of social injustice. Given the importance of the issue and the urgency of the times in which we are living, we are petitioning the Board of Social Work Examiners to add a requirement of three Category I CEUs in anti-racism work for bi-annual licensure renewal.

Recognizing the importance of anti-racism work, NASW has issued several statements in response to the current crisis in many cities across the country. The work of ending racism against people of color on a national level begins with each of us doing our part on a local level. This begins with educating ourselves beyond cultural competence. Practicing in a culturally competent way is an important standard of our profession; however, committing to understand the culture of another is not the same as committing to fight for social justice specifically by challenging individual and structural racism.

We therefore look forward to the Board of Social Work Examiner’s addition of 3 Category 1 CEUs in Anti-Racism to the requirements for bi-annual licensure renewal.”

The BSWE took a favorable view of the petition and it is our understanding that they are currently working on regulations to add such training to the CE requirements for social workers. Since SB 5 seems to be in keeping of our concerns for training in anti-racism we believe that it is a good idea and should be encouraged. We ask that you give a favorable report on SB 5.

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Respectfully,

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