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Legislative District 34B

Harford County

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## *The Maryland House of Delegates*

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### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 689

Due to the abrupt end of session in 2020, HB 1387 received a hearing in HGO, but there was no further action taken. HB 689 is the 2021 version of this bill, and I am requesting a favorable vote from this Committee. Senator West has cross filed this bill in the Senate.

This is a simple bill that will provide greater service to the citizens of Maryland who need mental health intervention in a timely and safe manner. The bill modifies involuntary admission requirements so that individuals in crisis have timely access to qualified health care professionals to expeditiously evaluate their need for admission to a facility.

By statute, LCSW-Cs already sign Emergency Petitions (E) to ensure that patients who are dangerous to themselves or others are taken to hospital ERs' for evaluation. Most hospital ERs' are under siege with a myriad of sick patients and do not have the time or facilities to wait for the second signatory for an involuntary admission. This bill will help those patients in crisis get to a safe and secure facility to receive the needed care and treatment.

The bill authorizes a licensed certified social worker - clinical (LCSW-C), in conjunction with a physician, to certify an individual for involuntary admission to a facility or a Veterans' Administration (VA) hospital.

#### **There is no fiscal impact from this bill.**

An LCSW-C is licensed by the Board of Social Work Examiners to "practice clinical social work," meaning the LCSW-C uses specialized education, training, and experience in evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of biopsychosocial conditions, mental and emotional conditions and impairments, and behavioral health disorders, including substance abuse disorders, addictive disorders, and mental disorders, petitioning for emergency evaluation, and practicing psychotherapy.

Applicants for licensure must have a master's degree from an accredited program, provide documentation of having completed two (2) years with supervised experience of at least 3,000 hours after receipt of the master's degree, with a minimum of 144 hours of periodic face-to-face supervision in practice.

There is one amendment to HB0689/743820/1 that I am offering:

The sum and substance of the bill is to allow LCSW-Cs to be able to be the second signature for the assent for the voluntary admission of a minor to a facility by a physician and the LCSW-C. The law already allows:

- 1) physician and psychologist;
- 2) 2 physicians [or]
- 3) 1 physician and 1 psychiatric nurse practitioner

And this amendment would add:

- 4) **1 PHYSICIAN and 1 LICENSED CERTIFIED SOCIAL WORKER-CLINICAL.**

**Significantly, there is a Letter of Support from the Maryland Department of Health.**

The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition (MDCSWC), sponsored by the Greater Washington Social for Clinical Social Work, strongly supports HB 689. The Coalition represents the interests of more than 9,500 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland.

I am followed by the following individuals:

1. Mr. Arthur Flax, LCSW-C and
2. Ms. Pam Kasemeyer- MdCSWC
3. Please see your written testimony.

**PLEASE SUPPORT HB 689**