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March 25, 2021

House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Room 241 House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

RE: SB 167 – State Board of Social Work Examiners – Temporary License to Practice Social Work

Dear Chairman Pendergrass and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to introduce Senate Bill 167, which will confer on the State Board of Social Work Examiners the *power* to issue temporary licenses to social worker applicants who, except for passing an examination, have met the appropriate education and experience requirements to be licensed as social workers. Please note that the decision whether to exercise this power will be entirely discretionary on the part of the Board.

The bill further provides that in the event the Board should decide to issue temporary licenses for bachelor social workers and/or master social workers, the temporary licensees may only practice social work under the supervision of a board-approved supervisor; in the event the Board should decide to issue temporary licenses for certified social workers and/or certified clinical social workers, the temporary licensees may practice social work without supervision.

Under the bill, any temporary social work licenses will only be valid until such time as the licensee fails to pass the required exam, fails to submit the exam results to the Board or becomes a permanently licensed social worker.

In the event that the Board should decide to issue temporary licenses, the Board will be able to promulgate regulations adding additional provisions governing the temporary licenses. So the Board will not only be given total discretion whether or not to issue temporary licenses, but it will also have the power to restrict and regulate the temporary licensees in their practices.

In view of the emergency situation engendered by the coronavirus pandemic, it should be obvious that our statutes should contain fallback provisions that can be invoked in crises. If we are very fortunate, the Board should never need to consider issuing temporary social worker licenses, but Senate Bill 167 puts that arrow into their quiver so that, in a pinch, they could deploy it.

I note that various other Maryland State licensing boards currently have the power to issue temporary licenses. These include the State Board of Dental Examiners, the State Board of

Morticians and Funeral Directors, the State Board of Nursing, the State Board of Occupational Therapy Practice and the State Board of Physicians. Furthermore, both Virginia and Minnesota have temporary licensure for social workers in effect for emergencies, and eight other states, including West Virginia and New York, have temporary or provisional licensure for social workers as a permanent part of their licensing laws.

The bottom line is that in future emergency situations, we need to be prepared for any eventualities, and it just makes sense to permit the State Board of Social Work Examiners to make the decision to issue temporary licenses in such situations.

For these reasons I ask the committee to vote favorably on Senate Bill 167.