

**Testimony before Health and Government Operations Committee  
Support with Amendment  
SB 77 – Health Occupations Boards – Investigations – Right to Counsel  
February 1, 2022**

Maryland’s Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW–MD), which represents professional social workers across the state, supports House Bill 77 – *Health Occupations Boards – Investigations – Right to Counsel*. This bill ensures that Maryland health occupation licensees are represented by counsel during Board investigations.

Although we appreciate that the Board of Social Work Examiners’ regulations already provides a right to counsel, NASW-MD still supports codifying this right into statute. Navigating the Board investigation and hearing process can be very complex for licensees and losing one’s license can mean a loss of one’s livelihood. NASW-MD does not want unethical social workers practicing in Maryland, but we also do not want individuals to wrongly lose their license. Access to an attorney ensures that a social worker’s rights are protected during an investigation and helps ensure a just outcome to disciplinary proceedings. This not only protects social workers but all Marylanders.

One small suggestion that NASW-MD has for this bill is requiring licensees to receive notification that they have a right to an attorney during Board investigations. A right to counsel is truly only effective if licensees know it exists.

We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 77. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mary Beth DeMartino, LCSW-C, Executive Director, NASW MD ([mdemartino.naswmd@socialworkers.org](mailto:mdemartino.naswmd@socialworkers.org)).