

Written Testimony in Favor of HB 173
State Board of Social Work Examiners – Temporary License to Practice Social Work

Thank you, Delegate Pendergrass, Delegate Pena-Melnyk, and all the members of the Health and Government Operations Committee for addressing this critical issue and therefore recognizing the vital role of social work, especially in times of crises. The University of Maryland, School of Social Work appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of HB 173, which amends the Maryland Social Work Licensing Statute by adding a Temporary License to Practice Social Work. We graduate on average 450 graduate MSWs each year and represent an extensive, skilled, and dedicated workforce of social workers in Maryland.

One requirement for social work licensing is the passing of a nationally administered test for each of the social work licenses (LBSW, LMSW, LCSW, LCSW-C.) These tests are offered through the National Association of Social Work Boards and are administered in-person at specific testing centers. An unintentional barrier created by the measures put in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19 was the limited offering of these in-person tests. Delays of months impacted our graduating students because they were unable to accept social work positions to serve the citizens of our state when needed most.

This change would allow the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners to issue a temporary license to an applicant who meets all other requirements, and are just waiting for the opportunity to sit for the exam. We all agree that we have an interest in ensuring that the public receive services from individuals with specialized education, practice, and skill. We can attest to the rigor of social work academic classes with multiple assignments and exams and two year-long field practicums which result in graduates with valuable practice experience and skills. Additional protection is provided in the bill, by requiring anyone working under the temporary LBSW or LMSW license to work under the supervision of an experience social worker. Many other professional boards have provided licensing flexibility to respond in times of crisis and we support this legislative option for social work professionals.

These barriers hurt recent and soon-to-be graduates in their ability to find employment, and also burdens the overwhelmed infrastructure of our public health crisis response. Social Workers are essential to a comprehensive response and offer a unique skill set that can help to mitigate disparities, often experienced by underserved communities, who are often impacted to a greater degree by public health crises. More importantly, it reduces the number energized social workers eligible and skilled to immediately contribute to the workforce in Maryland in a time of crisis. HB 173 includes language offered by the House and Senate last year on a similar piece of legislation by adding two time limits: a 90-day expiration of the temporary license after the test becomes available and is only an option if the test is at unavailable at least 7-days.

At such critical times, we as a profession are unable to fully respond to the needs of Maryland's citizens and are in need of the remedy offered in HB 173.

Respectfully submitted by



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