

Written Testimony in Favor of HB 1177
Courts - Expert Witnesses - Licensed Certified Social Workers-Clinical

Thank you Delegate Clippinger, Delegate Moon, and all the members of the Judiciary Committee for addressing this critical issue and therefore recognizing the vital role of social work. The University of Maryland, School of Social Work appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of HB 1177, which would extend the current law which authorizes a licensed psychologist to testify as an expert witness on certain issues in a court or administrative hearing to include a LCSW-C (Licensed Certified Social Worker–Clinical.)

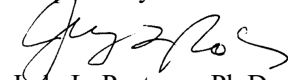
We recognize and support the language in the bill that extends the recognition of an expert witness to only include a licensed social worker at the highest level of licensing, the LCSW-C and not the other social work licenses (LBSW, LMSW, or LCSW.) The requirements to earn this highest level of licensure include the following steps which take a minimum of over a four-year process before earning the LCSW-C. Below is a description of the minimum requirements:

1. earn a master's degree from an accredited program;
2. successfully complete a minimum of 900 hours in two field placement practicums/professional internships;
3. practice social work competencies in both field placements under the supervision of a licensed and experienced social worker;
4. pass all the clinical coursework which is required for the LCSW-C;
5. pass the first (of two) national licensing test administered through the National Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) or the *Masters exam*;
6. complete additional application requirements to earn the LMSW license;
7. work with their LMSW license for a minimum of 3,000 hours of social work experience under the supervision of a LCSW-C;
8. the work experience must be "clinical social work experience" which is defined to include: completing assessments; formulating diagnostic impressions or a diagnosis; treating mental disorders and other conditions; treating behavioral health disorders including substance use disorders, addictive disorders and other conditions; and providing psychotherapy;
9. pass the second national licensing test administered through the National Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) which tests their clinical knowledge or *Clinical exam*; and
10. complete a minimum of 40 hours of continuing education in social work practice every two-year period.

I share these details to highlight that the steps along the licensing pathway for the LCSW-C has more than screened and prepared them to provide expert testimony. Streamlining this process for the courts will also offer some support for the over-burdened judicial system.

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 which are of service to the courts. Thank you for your consideration of HB 1177.

Respectfully submitted



Judy L. Postmus, Ph.D., ACSW, Dean & Professor
University of Maryland School of Social Work