

**Written Testimony (for Dean Postmus) in Favor of HB 1061**

*Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program - Private Company Employees with a Master's Degree in Social Work - Eligible Employment*

Thank you, Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, Delegate Kaiser, and all the members of the Appropriations Committee for addressing this critical workforce issue and also recognizing the vital role of social workers serving the citizens of Maryland. The University of Maryland, School of Social Work appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of HB 1061 which would extend the state's current loan assistance repayment program to "Private Company Employees" with a Master's Degree in Social Work (MSW.) We graduate on average 450 MSWs each year and we represent an extensive, skilled, and dedicated workforce of social workers in Maryland. We support all efforts to address the critical workforce issue in our state and support our graduates from the burdens of paying school loans when employed in lower-paying jobs.

The current loan program includes other behavioral health professionals (licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselors, licensed clinical marriage and family therapy counselors, and licensed clinical professional counselors) yet does not include social workers. Social workers are the largest provider of behavioral health services in the country and our state and often work in areas serving the most vulnerable populations in some of the most under-served areas of the state. During this session we have heard from state agencies and private agencies expressing concern over the large vacancies and impact this has on delivering services in a timely and effective manner.

In response, we respectfully offer the following friendly amendments so that this opportunity is also extended to include PUBLIC STATE agencies and clearly adds social workers to the list of behavioral health professionals already identified.

1. Amend the language on page 2 lines 5-7 to include:

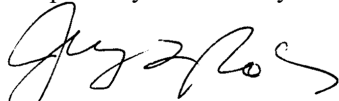
5 (2) Obtains eligible employment, **INCLUDING EMPLOYMENT IN A PUBLIC STATE AGENCY OR WITH A**  
6 **PRIVATE COMPANY IN A PUBLIC FACING ROLE, IF THE EMPLOYEE HAS A MASTER'S**  
7 **DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK;**

2. Amend the language on page 3 lines 6-10 to include:

6 (g) Subject to the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, the Office shall assist  
7 in the repayment of the amount of any higher education loan owed by a licensed clinical  
8 alcohol and drug counselor, a licensed clinical marriage and family therapy counselor, [or] a  
9 licensed clinical professional counselor, **OR A LICENSED SOCIAL WORKER** whose practice is  
located in a high-need geographic  
10 area of the State as determined by the Maryland Department of Health.

Thank you for your consideration HB 1061 and for extending this opportunity that exists for other behavioral health professionals to social workers.

Respectfully submitted by



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