

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB0871 (with the workgroup amendment) and SB0872

SB0871, Social Workers - Licensure Examinations - Moratorium and Workgroup
SB0872, State Board of Social Work Examiners - Temporary License to Practice Social Work

Maryland Senate Finance Committee Hearing

Andrea L. Agalloco, MSW, LCSW-C

March 9, 2023

Dear Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrea Agalloco. I have been a resident of Montgomery County Maryland since 2016 and live in District 20 currently. I'm a clinical social worker licensed in Maryland, DC and Virginia and work at a Federally Qualified Health Center with locations in Washington, DC, Silver Spring and Adelphi. I oversee a perinatal mental health program, focused on the prevention and treatment of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. I am in strong support for **SB0871 (with the workgroup amendment) and SB0872 which would provide temporary licensing and a moratorium on using exams in the licensing process for social workers in Maryland.**

These bills are especially important to the population served at the agency where I work where we are struggling to hire enough behavioral health providers to serve the needs in the Medicaid and uninsured populations we serve. The delay in licensure due to racial bias in testing directly impacts the ability of social workers to earn an income commensurate with their training in social work. These social workers also must pay exam fees repeatedly, which has a financial impact on them and their families. When the path to licensure takes longer, social workers lose out on earning income matching their training and degree and this impacts the workforce development and retention we're seeing in community behavioral health. The bias that has been shown in the current social work licensing exams has impacted more than 1200 mental health providers, more specifically social workers of color, who are older, or who speak a foreign language. These providers could be making such a difference for participants we're seeing at my agency if they can begin their clinical practice! There's a high need for Spanish speaking clinicians and clinicians of color to meet the needs on Montgomery County and Prince Georges County and that is precisely the potential clinicians who are being impacted by these biased exams. The agency where I work continues to operate with a waitlist for services, primarily for

people of color, non-English speakers, who would so benefit from receiving services from the very social workers who are struggling to be licensed to practice.

I urge this committee to take swift action in support of SB0871 (with the workgroup amendment) and SB0872 in order to readily allow educated and trained clinicians to begin serving clients throughout the state of Maryland. This is especially warranted given we have no evidence that the licensure exam is effectively assessing quality or safe social work practice. I encourage the passage of SB0871 with the workgroup amendment to create a more diversified workgroup to look at ways we could be assessing safe and quality social work practice in our state. Thanks for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Andrea L. Agalloco, MSW, LCSW-C

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