

Good afternoon, my name is Dr. Kyle S. Berkeley and I'm a licensed Masters Level Social Worker. I hope my words please the Maryland General Assembly. I have worked in this field of Social Work since 2009. During my career, I have only worked with 3 African American males with LCSW-C status, one of the males has taken on the role of CEO of the NASW. Sadly, the \$260 exam has become a gatekeeper for people like me to advance in this field. Before the ASWB released the data, proving a disproportionate pass-fail ratio for African Americans passing the exam, I wrote the previous Executive Director of the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners. Dr. Weinstien denied the board having data, dismissed the disparity, and blamed schools like Coppin for the disparity. I have the email chain. In my field of expertise, I work with the homeless and many times the most psychotic clients. Yet, with my training, and expertise, I can only amass entry-level pay due to my licensure. I also have to pay \$260 each time I take the exam. To further paint a picture of my world, I'm a married father of 3, and my youngest is special needs. I have paid thousands of dollars in training for organizations like LEAP, Phil in the Gaps, AGPAR, Therapist Development Center, and Social Work Solutions, only to watch my white colleagues, that used the same services, pass the exam and move up while I fail by a few points and continue to make entry-level pay. I have missed out on promotions, advancement in pay, and being able to provide for my family. I have attempted to pass this exam since 2019. I have experienced emotional and spiritual breakdowns due to this exam. I have also trained and educated the colleagues that passed the exam, on the first try, how to work with the clients that I am most qualified to work with. I have had supervisors and directors express concern, and attended meetings with the Maryland Board of Social Work to express echoing sentiments. If states like Illinois can pass legislation to support the profession and the communities we serve, Maryland should not be on the wrong side of history. Mental Health is an important field, serving the homeless, the youth, the disabled, veterans, substance abusers, African Americans, Asian Americans, Latin X, European Americans, the LGBTQ Plus community, returning citizens, inmates, and many more. We have experienced a pandemic, a recession, and inflation. I serve the people affected by what we have experienced. We should be growing the profession to serve, not gatekeeping with systematic practices that have been harmful to our people for generations.