

Testimony in Support of SB871_I. Davis .pdf

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Position: FAV

A.Imani Davis
MSW student
University of Maryland/Baltimore

Testimony in Support of
SB:871 Social Workers – Licensure Examinations – Moratorium and Workgroup
Senate Finance Committee
March 10, 2023

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Imani Davis, and I am a student. I am future mental health clinician and master's in social work candidate at the University of Maryland in Baltimore. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 871.

I am here because this bill directly impacts me. I am here because I am a member of the demographic that has been harmed by NASWs biased test. My heart raced the first time I learned **black women** over the **age of 40** have significantly lower pass rates than my white peers; my heart sank because they were talking about me.

As I have begun to turn my eyes towards graduation, (apparently it happens this May that was fast) and launch my second career as a clinical social worker, I learned from multiple sources, including a professor and I quote "I should put my mind in the mind-frame of a 30-something or middle aged white woman as I study, and prepare to sit the LMSW exam. Do you know how gut wrenching that is to hear? Even as I typed these words to share with you today, my whole body cringed with muscle memories of rejection known by too many who look like me, just for showing up in my skin.

Imagine if you could, preparing for an exam by negating or pocketing your life's wisdom, which at this stage in my life I have learned to trust more confidently. I trusted that wisdom at 40 something and I walked away from an incredible career in international development determined to apply the same energy domestically. I intend to be part of the change and make contributions here at home. I am here because I answered the call for the need of more mental health professionals. I am here because there is a shortage of black, female mental health professionals and I intend to fill that need.

I am asking for your support for SB0871 (and SB0872), which provide temporary licensing and a moratorium on using exams in the licensing process for social workers. States across the country are grappling with the profoundly discriminatory impact of biased licensing exams that have deprived Maryland of more than 1200 committed and competent mental health providers, specifically those of color, older, or foreign language speakers.

- Failing the test puts an undue financial and personal burden on these skilled professionals. Many have spent thousands of dollars in their attempts to pass, while working in lower income jobs because of the lack of a license.
- The exams deny Marylanders the help they deserve, especially in communities of color where the need is growing and where cultural connection to clients is essential.

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While the exams clearly create undue barriers to licensure disproportionately affecting applicants of color, in over 40 years of exam history, there is no evidence that the exam effectively assesses quality or safety of social work practice.

- These two bills allow otherwise qualified social workers to enter and advance practice, while the State develops an alternative practice-based assessment for licensing.

Thank you for your consideration.

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SB871 - FIN - FAV - ASchneider.pdf

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Position: FAV

SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 871

Social Workers – Licensure Examinations – Moratorium and Workgroup

FINANCE COMMITTEE

March 10, 2023

Thank you, Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and members of the Finance Committee, for your serious consideration of SB 871, which would suspend only the exam requirement for social work licensure and create a workgroup to develop recommendations for a more effective licensure process. My name is Adam Schneider. **All my experiences working with social workers, serving on the boards of social service agencies, and teaching undergraduate and graduate social work students – together with longstanding knowledge and newly released data about significant disparities in exam passage rates – motivate my strong support of SB 871.**

The social work licensing exams do not assess whether someone will practice competently or safely. If the function of the social work licensing exams is to assess competency, guarantee safety, promote accountability, or ensure ethical practice, then we must choose from two options:

- either the exams are functionally unsound, in which case there would be no legitimate reason to maintain them;
- or white people are more competent social workers than Black people, younger people are safer social workers than older people, native English speakers are more accountable social workers than non-native English speakers, and people who are not disabled are more ethical social workers than those who are disabled.

The second option is both absurd and offensive, so the only option is to accept that the exam clearly does not assess one's ability or ethics. Indeed, there is no evidence of a relationship between exam scores and safe, effective, or ethical social work,ⁱ and **there is ample evidence of the harm caused by the examsⁱⁱ – both on those who repeatedly fail the exams, and those they might be serving.**

Maryland's shortage of social workers is made significantly worse by the exam disparities. If all test-takers passed at the same rate as white test-takers, Maryland would have had over twelve hundred more social workers serving its residents in the past decade.ⁱⁱⁱ I have served on boards of directors for social service agencies that have had been unable to hire, retain, and promote people who are effective at working with some of Maryland's most vulnerable residents because they have been repeatedly unable to pass licensure exams.

While the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) has only recently released data demonstrating clear and alarming disparities in pass rates,^{iv} these have been well-known for years. Indeed, in my years in and adjacent to social work practice and education, I have witnessed some of the most effective and exemplary practitioners fail the exams multiple times. Disproportionately, those who struggled most to pass the exam were my colleagues and students who were Black or brown, older, lower income, non-native English speakers, or people disabled by the systems and structures of our society. **And yet, the ASWB and others have failed to act with any decisiveness – and now believe we need more time before we act to end such disparities. Their failures necessitate your action.**

SB 871 leaves in place all other requirements for licensure – including education, practice, and supervision requirements – and creates a workgroup to improve the licensure process. I support amendments to diversify the voices and experiences of those serving on the workgroup.

I thank you for your time and consideration, and I strongly urge a favorable report on SB 871.

Adam Schneider, MSW
adamfschneider@gmail.com

ⁱ Caldwell, B.E. & Rousmaniere, T. (2022). Clinical licensing exams in mental health care. <https://www.psychotherapynotes.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Clinical-Licensing-Exams-in-Mental-Health-Care-October-2022.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Castex, G., Senreich, E., Phillips, N. K., Miller, C. M., & Mazza, C. (2019). Microaggressions and racial privilege within the social work profession: The social work licensing examinations. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 28(2), 211-228. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15313204.2018.1555498>

ⁱⁱⁱ Association of Social Work Boards (2022). Exam pass rates by state/province. <https://www.aswb.org/exam/contributing-to-the-conversation/aswb-exam-pass-rates-by-state-province/>

^{iv} Association of Social Work Boards (2022). Contributing to the conversation: 2022 ASWB Exam Pass Rate Analysis. <https://www.aswb.org/exam/contributing-to-the-conversation/>

AAgalloco- Support SB0871 and SB0872.pdf

Uploaded by: Andrea Agalloco

Position: FAV

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

105 Whitmoor Terrace, Silver Spring, MD 20901

Senate Bill 0871 PDF.pdf

Uploaded by: Chloe Perez

Position: FAV

March 9, 2023

Senate Bill 0817

State Board of Social Work Examiners – License Examinations-Moratorium
and Workgroup

House Health and Government Operations

Position: FAVORABLE

I am Chloe Bernardi, President/CEO of Hearts and Homes for Youth and public policy co-chair of The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) which is an association of private child caring organizations providing foster care, group homes, and other services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. The members of MARFY represent providers who serve Maryland's children who are most vulnerable and are in out of home placements due to abuse, neglect or severe mental health, and medical needs. Hearts and Homes for Youth provides residential homes, treatment foster care, and independent living programs for pregnant and parenting teen moms throughout Maryland and have served over 41,000 young people since 1964. I have been in the field since 1997 and am an LCSW-C Supervisor.

Recently, the Association of Social Work Board published an alarming data analysis report highlighting the enormous disparities in the social work exam resulting in people of color failing at a significant rate compared to others. The information is staggering and sets people up for failure and prevents them from becoming licensed social workers even after completing all the required schooling. There is also an economic component in that each time a person fails, they must pay again to retake the test. This can not continue.

Approving SB 0871 will allow a skilled set of professionals to carefully assess the test, develop a comprehensive plan to redevelop it, and recreate a test that is fair, representative and allows an equitable chance for all people to take it and pass. We are already experiencing an epic national shortage of social workers, leaving kids and families mental health needs unmet, and this disparate exam contributes to the problem.



Hearts & Homes for Youth, Inc.
3919 National Drive, Suite 400
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301-589-8444

We urge you to vote FAVORABLE for House Bill 0871 so that we can even the playing field and allow for fully qualified individuals to enter the field of social work. Thank you for your time and consideration to this critical matter.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chloe Bernardi

Chloe Bernardi, LCSW-C, LICSW

President/CEO

For more information call or email: Therese M. Hessler | 301-503-2576 |
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BurkeSWEARTestimony.pdf

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Position: FAV

Burke Testimony

For Hearing, March 10, 2023

My name is Christina Burke. I am a Deaf licensed graduate social worker in DC and master social worker in MD. I am in favor of passing both SB871 and SB872. I am writing to share my story with you as a Deaf social worker who faces challenges current license regulations due to being restricted and inflexible. They are making the social work licensing process difficult to become a fully licensed clinical social worker.

I obtained my MSW degree from Gallaudet University in 2015 and moved to Oregon where I was hired as a school counselor at the school for the deaf in Salem in September 2016. Since there was no licensed clinical social worker to supervise me at my job, I sought supervision in the community. As a Deaf person whose primary language is ASL, I wanted to find an ASL proficient deaf or hearing supervisor so that we could communicate directly. If I were to work with a licensed clinical social worker who did not know ASL, there would be two challenges. One, I would have to pay for both the supervision and the interpreter. Two, my supervisor would have no cultural competence with the population that I was working with.

After determining that there was no licensed clinical social worker available to supervise me in ASL, my work recommended that I contact a Deaf psychologist, Dr. Jaime Wilson. Dr. Wilson is a nationally respected Deaf clinician and his background can be found at this link: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jabwilson/>. The Oregon Board of Social Workers required Dr. Wilson to complete six CEUs of specific content needed by board approved clinical supervisors. He did complete them and then we were approved by the board to begin our clinical supervision. I earned 1,131 hours under his tutelage. I was extremely grateful to the Oregon Board for its equitable decision on my behalf. Their actions cemented my faith in my chosen profession of Social Work.

I ended my employment in Oregon for family reasons and to support the significantly larger Deaf and hard of hearing community in Washington D.C. Before moving to Washington D.C. in October 2017, I called the District of Columbia Board of Social Work by using a video relay interpreting service to inquire if I could transfer my hours there from Oregon; they did not respond directly to my question about counting the Oregon hours. They only said that I can apply for LCSW when I meet their 3,000 hours requirement. I took their LGSW examination in June 2018. I failed it the first time by a few points. I retook the exam and passed it in September 2018. I began working as a mental health counselor for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. in November 2018 under LICSW supervisors who were Deaf and/or proficient in ASL until leaving that position in August 2019. CAPS' website can be found at this link: <https://gallaudet.edu/counseling-psychological-services/>.

I then found a Deaf supervisor who had both LICSW and LCSW-C licenses. That supervisor recommended that I obtain an LMSW through endorsement. I applied and got approved by the

Board of Social Work in Maryland. Then I became an independent contractor as a mental health teletherapist for National Deaf Therapy (NDT) and began seeing clients under an LICSW and LCSW-C supervisor in May 2020. To learn more about NDT, their link could be found at: <https://nationaldeaftherapy.com/>.

With Oregon, CAPS, and NDT, I had completed 3,000 hours of clinical hours and 100 hours of face-to-face supervision by May 2022. I submitted my application for the LICSW on May 26th, 2022. They denied my application on July 6th, 2022, because I did not have supervised hours by an LICSW supervisor in the state of Oregon. On July 11th, 2022, I appealed to the District of Columbia Board of Social Work's decision against my request for LCSW.

The District of Columbia Board of Social Work denied my appeal on July 25th, 2022, and requested me to complete 9 hours of immediate face to face supervision and 1118 general supervision or work hours under an LICSW.

On August 10th, 2022, I contacted Ms. Njeri Clay, the BSWE Staff Social Worker by email, explained my situation with the District of Columbia Board of Social Work, and asked her if Maryland would consider my situation and accept the hours from Oregon towards my application for LCSW-C. Ms. Clay replied back, stating that the Maryland BSWE does not accept supervision outside of their profession and that she did not see an allowed exception indicated in their regulations. Her response deterred me from applying for the LCSW-C. I have continued to practice under supervision and currently, I am at 2,265 hours of supervised social work experience and 126 hours of periodic direct face-to-face supervision (not counting the Oregon hours)

While I understand the regulations, I felt that my circumstances warrant further consideration, and in September 2022, I contacted the National Association for the Deaf, "the nation's premier civil rights organization of, by, and for deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the United States of America" to discuss my situation (<https://www.nad.org/about-us/>). Due to competing demands on their resources, a meeting has not yet been scheduled.

Thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony. I hope my situation will give you a better idea of how inequities in the licensing process for BIPOC candidates and candidates in other populations is an issue that needs to be resolved.

Respectfully,

Christina Burke, MSW, LMSW, LGSW
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Pucci Testimony.pdf

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Position: FAV

TESTIMONY

Concetta Pucci, PhD, LGSW, LMSW

March 10, 2023

Hello, my name is Dr. Concetta Pucci. I am a Field Program Assistant and Lecturer in the Social Work Department at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. Additionally, I am currently providing clinical therapy services with two agencies: National Deaf Therapy and Deaf REACH to earn my clinical hours.

This took me over 20 years to get where I am today and I am still not clinically licensed as a social worker yet because of language and accessibility barriers in taking exams. Why? Because of my DeafBlind disability. I am testifying in supporting both bills – SB0871: Social Workers - Licensure Examinations - Moratorium and Workgroup and SB0872: State Board of Social Work Examiners- Temporary License to Practice Social Work. Here's my timeline story to give you an idea how hard it was and it still is.

May 2001: Graduated with Bachelors of Science in Social Work (BSSW) at Rochester Institute of Technology

May 2002: Graduated with Masters of Social Work (MSW) in an Advanced Standing Program at New York University.

Sept. 2002: Hired as a school social worker at Lexington School for the Deaf in New York City with a condition that I am required to be licensed by a deadline.

2002 - 2005: Took New York ASWB's Master-level social work exams 5 times. Failed by 1-4 points every time and I was so close to pass the exam. My NY accommodations were given as follows: (1) two extended hours given on the exam, (2) taking the exam in a private room, and (3) ASL interpreters to interpret only vocal instructions by the exam proctor.

- 2003: I was required to be a licensed school social worker in New York State so I was hired as a school social worker and was given a timeline to get my license. I had to apply to get a provisional social work license and was rejected because I failed a few exams previously. I had to get a “teacher’s certificate” which was a loophole in the system that I had to find ways to keep my job with the human resource manager and supervisor’s support. They knew that they needed to keep me because I am Deaf and needed to provide counseling services to deaf kids by using American Sign Language (ASL) in school.
- 2005: Took my 5th exam and failed once again so I basically gave up. I felt that I am repeating over and over which did not get me to move forward so I re-evaluated and decided to explore another career option that I can succeed in. That was a very emotionally traumatizing experience for me.
- 2006: The most difficult decision I had to make was leaving my job as I truly loved working with my students and I could not move forward without a license. I decided to quit my social work career and pursued to get my PhD at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C.
- 2012: Graduated with my PhD in Special Education Administration.
- 2015: I was still bothered that I am still not a licensed social worker. A little thing behind my head was telling me, “Let’s try one more time!” So I registered for DC ’s ASWB exam. DC’s regulation of accommodations is different from NY as follows: (1) ASL interpreters for the exam proctor’s vocal instructions AND translating the English exam questions and multiple choice answers if needed, (2) taking the exam in the private room, and (3) four hours extended with lunch break. As a matter of fact, this was very helpful because some questions/answers were too challenging especially when two answers were TOO similar so I had interpreters translate them and I understood BETTER through ASL – my native language. After 10 years of hiatus from the social work practice, as a result, I FINALLY passed and got my LGSW in DC.
- 2019: Hired as a Field Program Assistant at Gallaudet University with an understanding that I am required to be clinical licensed to supervise student-interns. I started earning my clinical hours by working as a mental health therapist for Deaf REACH – supervised by LICSW.

2021: Got my LMSW in MD by endorsement. And, began my National Deaf Therapy work and supervised by both LICSW and LCSW-C.

March 2023: I have about 300 clinical hours left to go before taking my clinical license exam. Now, I am experiencing anxiety and fear of taking the exam again. Taking exams over and over is re-traumatizing. So terrified.

Who else would experience this kind of long journey to become a clinical licensed social worker? Us – the Black, Brown, Indigenous, People of Color, Individuals with Disabilities, Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard-of-Hearing members, Elders, those whose primary language is not English, and marginalized individuals. It is evident this is a long history of problematic issues that the ASWB licensing exam is not equitable and accessible. This does harm many of us – causing us trauma, pain, and harm. Passing these two bills would be part of the anti-racism movement in our profession which would increase more access to provide mental health services in the state of MD. Please support these two bills so others do not have to experience the same trauma as I did in my 20+ years and I do not have to experience re-trauma again when I take my clinical exam after I am done with my clinical hours this year.

Thank you for your time reading this very important testimony.

Respectfully submitted by Concetta Pucci, PhD, LGSW, LMSW
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Written Testimony for MGA.pdf

Uploaded by: Eleshia Thomas

Position: FAV

I Eleshia Thomas, MSW support for SB0871 and SB0872, which provide temporary licensing and a moratorium on using exams in the licensing process for social workers.

States across the country are grappling with the profoundly discriminatory impact of biased licensing exams that have deprived Maryland of more than 1200 committed and competent mental health providers, specifically those of color, older, or foreign language speakers.

- Failing the test puts an undue financial and personal burden on these skilled professionals. Many have spent thousands of dollars in their attempts to pass, while working in lower income jobs because of the lack of a license.
- The exams deny Marylanders the help they deserve, especially in communities of color where the need is growing and where cultural connection to clients is essential.

While the exams clearly create undue barriers to licensure disproportionately affecting applicants of color, in over 40 years of exam history, there is no evidence that the exam effectively assesses quality or safety of social work practice.

- These two bills allow otherwise qualified social workers to enter and advance practice, while the State develops an alternative practice-based assessment for licensing.

I am currently studying for the aswb master level exam and as a person in the field I find myself being intimidated by this exam due to the biases material and unrealistic practice statements. I am currently the owner of a outpatient mental clinic in Baltimore, Maryland. I pride myself in being apart of the human service field and I am looking forward to being an license therapist however I am extremely discouraged when seeing the number of people who have not been able to pass this exam. With the growing number of social workers leaving the field due to burn out or retirement it is critical for more social workers to support and enter the field of social work in order to provide effective and need services to humanity. Please consider passing these bills for the benefit of the citizens of Maryland as well as the better of communities across the United States and globally.

Sincerely,

Eleshia B. Thomas, MSW

March 9, 2023

Health Care for the Homeless - 2023 FAV SB 871 - S

Uploaded by: Joanna Diamond

Position: FAV

**HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF**

SB 871 – Social Workers - Licensure Examinations - Moratorium and Workgroup

**Senate Finance Committee
March 10, 2023**



Health Care for the Homeless strongly supports SB 871, which would put a moratorium on social worker licensure examinations as well as develop a workgroup to identify alternatives and recommendations to said social worker license examination requirements and develop recommendations. We must have an immediate response to the impact to BIPOC professionals and communities of discriminatory licensing exams, which have kept many out of the social work profession and/or independent practice. This bill would go a long way in correcting an undeniable injustice and eliminating the racial disparities that exist in passage of this problematic examination.

The Data Shows Stark Disparities, Particularly for Race and Age¹

In August of 2022, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) released a report confirming what we already knew: the examination pass/fail rates showed stark disparities across race, age, and language.

According to the national data, the pass rates for the clinical examination (with 2+ attempts) across race was: Black: 57%; Hispanic/Latino 77%; White: 91%. This national data broken down by age was: age ranges 18-29: 91% and age ranges 50+: 65%. Also according to national data, the pass rates for the masters exam (with 2+ attempts) broken down by race was: Black: 52%; Hispanic/Latino: 71%; White: 91%.

The national data on rates for first-time passed at the Clinical Level (LCSW-C) broken down by race include: Black: 43.5%; Hispanic/Latinx: 63%; White: 83.5. At the Masters Level (LMSW), the exam first-time pass rate by race was: Black: 44.65%; Hispanic/Latinx: 64%; and White: 86%.

According to *Maryland* data broken down by race and ethnicity, the first-time passed rate for the Clinical (LCSW-C) Exam was: Black: 53.4%; Hispanic/Latinx: 65.9%; and White: 88.4%. For the Masters (LMSW) Exam, the first-time pass rate by race was: Black: 51.4%; Hispanic/Latinx: 75%; and White: 90%.

This data cannot be ignored.

We Need Equitable Licensure for Social Workers

We seek inclusivity and equitability in the licensure process and the elimination of harmful barriers for BIPOC social work professionals. Licensure does not need to be based on exam scores, especially exams that are discriminatory and lack evidence that they are related to actual practice. The disaggregated data show glaring and unacceptable discrepancies in pass rates based on race, age, educational institution, and geographic location. This results in tangible harms, including spending \$100s or \$1,000s to re-prep and re-take the exams as well as untold psychological harm to qualified professionals unable to pass the exam by no fault of their own.

¹ Testimony data and references provided, in part, by Social Workers for Equity and Anti-Racism (SWEAR) and National Association of Social Workers – Maryland (NASW-MD).

This problem is exacerbated by the fact that we have a significant workforce shortage when it comes to social workers. **We must aggressively address the implicit biases and root causes of these data.**

Below is an account from Health Care for the Homeless Therapist Case Manager Tammy Montague, LMSW

To reduce the harms of the 'BIPOC' population associated with the Association of Social Work Board (ASWB) licensing Exams

My name is Tammy Montague, LCSW-C; and I am employed with Health Care for the Homeless as a Therapist Case Manager in Baltimore City, Maryland.

As an older black woman practicing social work, I was not surprised by the racial disparities in pass rates for people of color that was published last August by the ASWB. I was told many times by other black people that struggled in getting licensed as a social worker to "choose the answer that a middle-aged white woman would choose". I understood at that point that I would be facing adversity. It would not be the first time I have experienced 'white privileged' affects for "black folk". Nevertheless, the thought of reducing my self-image as a black professional that spent years in academia and graduating from a nationally accredited HBCU ached at the core of my being.

I remember the old saying, "I got mines; you got yours to get". And I don't subscribe to this but it feels like the social work profession through the required ASWB exam, that has now shown itself to be a racially biased exam, has moved to a point of excluding and leaving people behind. If this is the case, then black people have been chosen to walk in that exclusion. After 3 times of failing the LCSW-C, I passed on the 4th time. I must say that it was a hard journey to overcome. While others think that after passing the LCSW-C exam it is a time of rejoicing, I know in my heart that it is not. As our new governor, Wes Moore, said,

"Let's Get To Work! As we embark together on our state's next chapter, we commit to our shared mission to leave no one behind. No matter where you start in life, you deserve an equal opportunity to succeed – a job you can raise a family on and the chance to create wealth for you and your family."

I fear that others will take on the mindset that an exam, any exam, even a racially biased exam, is a way of determining competence, ethical standards, and the ability to serve humanity. We must address this issue today. Please!!!! We have to stop hurting one another for the sake of professional security. I remember hearing our former governor stating that we must "shatter the status quo" in order to make appropriate changes for the betterment of our society.

Failing the exam was devastating for me and it took almost a year for me to muster up the courage to re-take it. And, I thank God that my employer provided professional development funds to help with the thousands of dollars associated with trying to prepare for the exam. Nonetheless, there are many individuals that do not have the financial support to get additional help in preparing for this test. For me, none of the preparatory workshops and tutorials worked on their own. I failed again and again. It was not until I embodied a 'double consciousness' in studying and taking the exam to pass it. I do not feel triumphant because I know many other black professionals that are just as capable of providing mental health services to people in our community that are 'left behind'. The bottom line is that the pass rates of the ASWB exam show inequities and therefore personify an injustice for many black professionals that have been excluded from joining the ranks of licensed clinicians as a result of failing a racially biased exam.

I sincerely hope that the committee will consider passage of these important bills.

Thank you for your time.

Request to Ensure Diversity in the Workgroup

We request a workgroup that is more diverse and we will gladly engage with the relevant stakeholders to determine who is best to serve on the workgroup. Additionally, we would like to eliminate the State Board of Social Work Examiners from the legislation's workgroup, as they are the entity administering and reviewing the examinations that have caused such a stark racial disparity.

SB 871 Will Help in Eliminating these Inequities

As SB 871 contemplates, we support the elimination of the entry-level exams² and replacement of the clinical level exam.³ Ultimately we need a more culturally competent process. However, it is clear we can no longer administer this racially biased examination as it stands. We strongly urge a favorable report on SB 871.

Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland's leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We deliver medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, housing support services, and housing for over 10,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County.

Our Vision: Everyone is healthy and has a safe home in a just and respectful community.

Our Mission: We work to end homelessness through racially equitable health care, housing and advocacy in partnership with those of us who have experienced it. For more information, visit www.hchmd.org.

² CSWE* and University leaders: graduates from accredited Bachelors and Masters programs are qualified to be licensed at their respective levels for supervised practice.

³ An effective human-centered, practice-based assessment process should be developed to screen for competence and safety for independent practice.

Mouny SWEAR Testimony--March 10, 2023.pdf

Uploaded by: Judith Mouny

Position: FAV

Mounty Testimony

For Hearing, March 10, 2023

My name is Dr. Judy Mounty. I am a deaf licensed clinical social worker in private practice in Maryland and a Board of Social Work Examiners (BSWE)-approved supervisor. I am testifying in support of bills S.B. 871 and S.B. 872, which provide for temporary licensing and a moratorium on using examinations in the licensing process for social workers.

States across the country are grappling with the profoundly discriminatory impact of biased licensing examinations. This issue has deprived Maryland of more than 1,200 committed and competent mental health providers, including people of color, older candidates, nonnative speakers of English, and deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Failing the licensing examination puts an undue financial and personal burden on these skilled professionals, many of whom have spent thousands of dollars in their attempts to pass, and who often work in lower income jobs because of their lack of a license. Importantly, while the examinations clearly create undue barriers to licensure disproportionately affecting these applicants, in over 40 years of examination history, there is no evidence to show that the examination effectively assesses the quality or safety of social work practice.

As with social workers from other disproportionately affected communities, deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind social workers provide an essential cultural connection. Deaf and hard of hearing people need social workers who are bilingual in American Sign Language and English and who share their lived experiences.

The United States Census Bureau estimates that there are 5,976,407 individuals living in Maryland. Based on the finding of a study conducted by Johns Hopkins University, it is estimated that there are approximately 1.2 million Marylanders aged 12 years or older who are

deaf or hard of hearing in at least one ear, and 759,000 Marylanders aged 12 years or older who are deaf or hard of hearing in both ears. These numbers are extrapolated from the Johns Hopkins study's findings and the U.S. Census Bureau's data.

For many deaf and hard of hearing candidates, the linguistic structure of the test items (problematic from the outset because this population has a different experience acquiring and accessing English) and cultural bias of the examination has profoundly impacted access to licensure, employment, ability to serve their population, and advancement in their profession. The issues for deaf and hard of hearing graduates of social work programs are poignantly illuminated in a 2010 article in the *Journal of Social Work in Disability and Rehabilitation* by Dr. Martha Sheridan, Dr. Barbara J. White, and myself titled [“Deaf and Hard of Hearing Social Workers Accessing Their Profession: A Call to Action”](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15367100903524091) (https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15367100903524091).

The passage of S.B. 871 and S.B. 872 would allow otherwise qualified social workers to enter and advance practice, while the state develops an alternative practice-based assessment, increasing equity in the licensing process.

Over the course of my 40-plus years of professional experience across multiple disciplines, including psycholinguistics, education, educational research, and now social work, I have witnessed the devastating effects of not passing licensing and certification examinations on the careers and lives of deaf and hard of hearing professionals. For a period of time, I was a research scientist at Educational Testing Service (ETS), investigating why standardized tests are problematic for deaf and hard of hearing people and other populations, and what could be done about it. I co-authored *Assessing Deaf Adults: Critical Issues in Testing and Evaluation* (Gallaudet University Press, 2005), which includes a chapter focused on social work licensing

and discusses the results of a study of deaf and hard of hearing people with social work degrees and their efforts to become licensed

[<https://gupress.gallaudet.edu/bookpage/ADABookpage.html>].

In 22 years at Gallaudet University, my service included being the Director of Field Education in the Department of Social Work for four years, and teaching a variety of social work courses. Additionally, I worked with Dr. Ellen Schaefer-Salins, currently Professor of Social Work at Salisbury University, to develop a special test preparation course for deaf and hard of hearing social work licensure candidates in the early 2000s. Gallaudet University has CSWE-accredited BSW and MSW programs. Social work is currently the number one major at the university. Hundreds of deaf and hard of hearing people have graduated from MSW programs at Gallaudet and other universities in the past two decades alone. Although there is no reliable data on the licensure status of deaf and hard of hearing individuals, anecdotally we know that a large percentage are not passing the test in Maryland and elsewhere. Some postpone or never take a licensing test out of profound fear of not passing.

Along with Dr. Barbara J. White, a now-retired deaf social worker and former chair of the Gallaudet Department of Social Work, I had several meetings and many communications with the chief executive officer of the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), starting around 2000. We explained the nature of the problem and asked for their support and assistance in collecting data and addressing the issues. The interest was there but there were concerns about cost, given the relatively small size of our community. Also expressed were concerns about collecting and reporting data because of the ADA. ASWB invited me to give presentations several times. In 2004, my husband, Robert Weinstock, who had also worked at ETS and Gallaudet University, and I presented to a blue-ribbon committee of ASWB providing specific

guidance in reimagining test development. A similar presentation was made to ASWB in 2015. I have also expressed interest in becoming involved in the test development process, thus far to no avail.

These bills provide much-needed stop-gap solutions to a very pervasive issue for many populations. It is my hope that these bills will create opportunities for collaboration on equitable solutions and multiple pathways to licensure.

Judith L. Mounty, Ed.D., MSW, LCSW-C

Takoma Park, Maryland

Testimony from Lisa Kays on SB871 and SB872-2.pdf

Uploaded by: Lisa Kays

Position: FAV

**Written Testimony from Lisa Kays, LICSW, LCSW-C, LCSW regarding SB0871 and 0872
FAVORABLE WITH THE WORKGROUP AMENDMENT**

I am writing as a licensed clinical social worker in the state of Maryland (LCSW-C) and a consumer of mental health services, particularly for my sons (age 7 and 4) in Maryland, to urge your support of the following bills recently introduced by Representative Mary Washington.

[SB0871](#)-Title: Social Workers - Licensure Examinations - Moratorium and Workgroup

[SB0872](#)-Title: State Board of Social Work Examiners - Temporary License to Practice Social Work

These bills seek to allay the harm being done by the multi-level licensure exam in my profession, which has been demonstrated to pose significant racial bias towards my colleagues of color. We are currently the only profession that requires 3 levels of exams and at each level, my colleagues of color, as well as deaf and older colleagues, pay and labor to complete degrees and then are unable to use them because the exam's bias makes it impossible for them to pass these exams. As a clinical supervisor, I have witnessed this firsthand with supervisees, whom would immediately benefit from the relief provided in these bills.

In addition to my colleagues, this exam, and the ASWB's gaslighting and abject refusal to acknowledge the harm the exam does and to rectify it, not only harm the social workers who invest in a career and then face severe financial penalty when they can't access independent licensure, but it poses significant workforce issues when patients and people served in social work agencies can't be treated and served by someone who looks like and has the same lived experience as they do.

Additionally, I have recently noticed that when I go to look for therapists of a certain modality requiring advanced skills and training, such as IFS or somatic experiencing, both evidence-based treatments providing high levels of symptom relief quite quickly to people, most all of those certified are white. While this isn't solely due to the biased exam, it speaks to a systemic issue within our profession where people of color cannot advance due to these financial, emotional and logistical barriers, and then, even if they do, are left so financially encumbered that they likely can't pay for these higher levels of training. It is highly problematic for a profession that serves so many people of color to be so white and this exam is contributing extensively to that problem.

I can also say as a licensed social worker who is white and passed all of these exams the first time that the exams are absurd. Absurd. I feel experientially and the data supports that they contribute nothing to "public safety" as the ASWB likes to tout, are extremely cut off from the actual skills, ethics and knowledge social workers need, and are an arbitrary waste of time that contribute nothing to our profession or the safety of those it serves. It is my experience as a student, supervisee, and now, supervisor, of social work that the course work and intensive supervision we receive in order to achieve clinical licensure are the factors that truly contribute

to ethical and competent practice and provide more than enough guardrails to ensure that practitioners are serving the public well. The exam is nothing but a meaningless obstacle with no bearing on competence.

You will find that many programs that help people of color "study" for the exam are literally saying to them a version of, "You just have to learn to think like a white woman" and that is the "skill" being taught openly and often that helps individuals pass. It sounds like I may be making this up, but I assure you, I am not. I have heard it repeatedly.

I have a specific supervisee who has suffered immensely under these exams, who is seeking licensure in MD. She is bi-lingual, an immigrant, and serves children, a population in dire need of clinical professionals currently. In terms of clinicians needed skills right now, she is a unicorn. I can't get my own son a therapist currently, and he's on numerous waitlists, much less a *Spanish-speaking bilingual therapist*. She has failed the exam 7 times, often by 1 point only, despite her being a very talented, skilled and highly ethical social worker. She has endured extraordinary financial hardship as a result, and faced a career setback of over a decade. She wonders if she should give up and leave the profession, and I don't blame her, or, quite frankly, counsel her otherwise. Given how few points she fails the exam by, it is impossible to not wonder if the exam questions she fails are ones ASWB later finds are biased—but yet does nothing about. She has written ASWB to ask for a remedy, and their response is basically to critique her study skills. This legislation would provide immediate relief to people in her situation, allowing them to achieve licensure and to serve people in our communities who very much need care.

I will add that I recently attended the ASWB "Community Conversations" about the exam and none of the social workers in my focus group, a sampling from across the United States, expressed any appreciation for or validity to the objectives of the exam as related to public safety. None see it as important or think it effectively screens out good or bad social workers, in any way. The consensus was that it assesses the capacity to take a standardized test—which has nothing to do with actual social work practice or skill.

I hope you will consult with many social workers and look at the workforce data in Maryland surrounding our profession, and really talk with social workers about how this exam has affected their colleagues and how they feel it serves the profession in deciding if you'll support these bills, and I hope that in the end you'll take the anti-racist action of alleviating much of the harm caused by these exams to the greatest extent possible in Maryland.

I am happy to talk further or to answer any questions you may have.

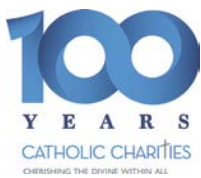
Sincerely,
Lisa Kays
LCSW-C

7008 Braeburn Court
Bethesda, MD 20817
202-489-6882
lisa@lisakays.com

SB0871_CC_Klingenmaier_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Lisa Klingenmaier

Position: FAV



SB 871
Social Workers – Licensure Examinations – Moratorium and Workgroup
Senate Finance Committee
March 10, 2023
Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports SB 871, which temporarily waives the examination requirement for all levels of social work licensure, and instructs the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to establish a workgroup to identify and recommend exam alternatives to assess social work competency.

Inspired by the Gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. For 100 years, Catholic Charities has accompanied Marylanders as they age with dignity, obtain empowering careers, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success and feel welcome as immigrant neighbors. As the largest human service provider in Maryland we employ hundreds of social workers, and we recognize the importance of having a robust and diverse workforce.

Behavioral health providers, like Catholic Charities, have experienced a significant and unprecedented workforce crisis. The obstacles to hire social workers due to a national shortage were significant prior to 2020, and this challenge became even more compounded as a result of the pandemic. Unfortunately, thousands of social workers who have completed their degree programs are missing from the Maryland workforce due to the licensure examination process. The reduction in our state's social work capacity due to struggles with the licensure exam subsequently hinders clinical services to our youth, families and communities.

We want a workforce that is representative of the Marylanders we serve in our programs and the ability to uplift lived experience as a critically valuable expertise: two goals that are stifled by the current social work licensure exams. There are massive and alarming racial disparities in the passage rate of the LMSW and LCSW-C licensure exams, meaning thousands of social workers are left out the workforce who – besides passing a biased exam – have all the experience, training, and skills needed to practice social work. Additionally, the racial disparities in passage means – as an agency – we struggle to find social workers who share the same identities as the families and individuals we serve, which is a massive disservice to our clients, communities, and our state. For instance, we have long struggled to hire Spanish-speaking social workers at the Esperanza Center, and the disparities in exam passage for who test takers whose first language isn't English directly contribute to this challenge.

SB 871 take the critical step of suspending licensure exams while the State takes the time necessary to develop an assessment that does not perpetuate inequality and discrimination. SB 871 follows the lead of the National Association of Social Workers, which announced they oppose the use of the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) exams based on the clear and incontrovertible evidence they discriminate against marginalized groups.¹ SB 871 recognizes that agencies, the social work profession, and Maryland overall benefits when we can create a more diverse network of social workers.

For the reasons listed above, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 871.

Submitted By: Lisa Klingenmaier, Assistant Director of Advocacy

¹ NASW. 2023. <https://www.socialworkers.org/News/News-Releases/ID/2611/NASW-Opposes-Association-of-Social-Work-Boards-ASWB-Exams>
320 Cathedral Street | Baltimore MD 21201-4421 | 667 600 2000 | www.cc-md.org

testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Lynn Panepinto

Position: FAV

Good afternoon,

I am submitting written testimony **in support of both SB0871 (with the amendment of the more diversified workgroup) and SB0872**. These bills address the well-documented exam bias in social work licensing exams, which disproportionately and unjustly affects social workers with marginalized identities. As a licensed social worker in Maryland, a member of the National Association of Social Workers- Maryland Chapter, and a supporter of Social Workers for Equity and Anti-Racism, I urge the members of the Senate Finance Committee to join me and many others in supporting these bills.

For the past decade and a half, I have worked in various parts of the United States with survivors of violence and trauma, and it has become clear to me that systemic violence, such as inequity and racism, is at the root of many people's trauma. Not only have I witnessed the effects of inequity and racism among clients, but I have also seen examples of this within the field of social work. I have talked with social workers who, despite their social work acumen and expertise, struggle to pass the licensing exam and/or pay inordinate amounts of money to become licensed. I must note that these social work colleagues have all been women of color whose first language is Spanish; in my work as a bilingual social worker, I have seen firsthand how the dearth of bilingual social workers drastically affects service delivery in Maryland. I have felt outraged at the way in which the licensing process stalls and deters excellent candidates from becoming social workers, when we are well aware that there is a mental health crisis and we need more social workers, particularly those with diverse lived experiences and linguistic skills. The status quo is unacceptable, and change is long overdue.

I am very hopeful that these recently introduced bills can move our field forward and bring more of the change that many of us are ready for and working hard to see. Please support SB0871 and SB0872. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Lynn Panepinto, LCSW-C
902 Andover Road
Baltimore, MD 21218

Testimony March 10, 23 for SB 871 & 872.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary C. Slicher

Position: FAV



3601 Old Frederick Road
Baltimore, MD 21229
(410) 837-1400
www.projectplase.org

To: Honorable Senator Mary Washington

March 6, 2023

Finance committee members

From: Mary C. Slicher, LCSW-C

Executive Director

Project PLASE, Inc.

(People Lacking Ample Shelter & Employment)

Re: Testimony in favor of SB 871 and SB 872

This testimony comes in support of SB 871 and SB 871. I thank Senator Mary Washington for her initiative in introducing these measures.

I am the Executive Director of Project PLASE, Inc. (People Lacking Ample Shelter & Employment), a charitable housing and service organization with 49 years of serving unhoused individuals and families in the Baltimore City and County areas.

I also am a Licensed Certified Social Worker- Clinical (LCSW-C) and am very proud of my degree, license, and profession. I see Social Work as a noble profession personifying equity and justice in its passion and work on behalf of individuals as well as society. My work has been literally life-saving for the individual or family but also creates equity on a community-basis and does so in quiet, effective, and persistent ways.

Hence, the inequity at the door, the portal that is not allowing other trained social workers to claim that title via a license is of concern to me.

These 2 bills will explore other ways to assure qualified persons, who are not good test takers or most likely are hurt and hampered by the bias built into these tests, can qualify officially. It is key that MSW (Master Level Social Workers) are considered fairly and allowed into this valuable profession at a time when their work in society is needed more than ever.

Hence, I support these two bills and their efforts to explore other ways to measure competency and also grant one year's licensure during this process for the following reasons:

- 1) I am an Executive Director with 13 Master Level Social workers, all African Americans on staff who do not have their licenses because of difficulty with the tests. This is true despite the fact that they have successfully achieved academic and clinical studies resulting in completed master's degrees, internships, and qualified experience.

Despite this lack of license, they are serving capability in the roles of Case Managers, Health Navigators, Shelter managers, administrators, and more—but not as Social workers.



This limits their perceived qualifications and next steps, but not their abilities.

- 2) I feel there is definitely a racial element in this, not only through my and PLASE'S experiences but also the research indicates state-wide. This goes against the equity value and goal of the profession itself. I support having congruency between the means and the ends or goals.
- 3) The effect and reach of this are beyond the immediate.

What I mean by this is that -----

Without this licensure, the profession does not allow these individuals to serve as supervisors and mentors, teachers of both Social work interns as well as master-trained social workers, themselves acquiring the required supervision for licensure, to even qualify to take the test. Hence the life and professional experience of these, largely African American individuals are not incorporated into the supervisor-supervisee relationship and learning exchange. These missed opportunities and experiences are not passed on and formulated, or integrated into the work of these budding social workers. I only wonder if this is one way that bias is furthered. Their life experiences and training and supervisory perspective would shape the next generation of social workers, in ways that I as a white female could not, despite all desires. My life experiences do not reflect their same life experiences.

- 4) Having Licensed Social workers who reflect the populations in need in certain areas of work is crucial. PLASE's population is 75-85 % African American, for example.
- 5) Further this discrepancy has limited the ability to hire Licensed Social workers and has contributed to a perceived deficit where there are many trained persons who could qualify, with an alternative way to measure and assure their entrance into this profession, hence and then be allowed to offer effective, ethical supportive social work.

I thank you in advance for your time and interest, and passage of these bills.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or interest to talk further.

I can be reached at MSLICHER@PROJECTPLASE.ORG, 410. 837. 1400, EXT. 111 OR 443.980-0626

Sincerely,



Mary C. Slicher

Executive Director

Project PLASE, Inc.

People Lacking Ample Shelter & Employment

3601 Old Frederick Road

Baltimore, Md. 21229

CC: Finance Committee:

Melony G. Griffith, Chair

Katherine A. Klausmeier, Vice-Chair

Pamela G. Beidle

Arthur C. Ellis

Dawn D. Gile

Antonio L. Hayes

Stephen S. Hershey, Jr.

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MDAD SB 871 - Social Workers - Licensure Examinati

Uploaded by: MDAD President MDAD President

Position: FAV



Maryland Association of the Deaf
Written Testimony
SB 871 - Social Workers - Licensure Examinations - Moratorium and Workgroup
Friday, March 10, 2023
Position: Favorable

President

Kirsten Poston

The Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD) is a statewide organization that protects the interests of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Marylanders regarding accessibility and equality issues.

Vice President

Tina Joyner

MDAD supports the bill, SB 871, that is sponsored by Senator Washington. Many Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing people who graduated with a Social Work degree from Gallaudet and other universities are struggling with the Social Worker Examination for numerous reasons. For many Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing candidates, the linguistic structure of the test items (problematic from the outset because this population has a different experience acquiring and accessing English) and cultural bias of the examination has profoundly impacted access to licensure, employment, ability to serve their population, and advancement in their profession.

Secretary

Jacob Leffler

Treasurer

Board Members

Vikki Porter

Toyin Fasakin

Tisha Bera

Blaise Delahoussaye

Angela Rogers

Peter Un

Oftentimes, Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing people's first language is not English, so they learn English in school. We are less exposed to multiple meanings to the words, especially the kind of English used on standardized tests. We do not have access to incidental learning through English or another language spoken in our environment. Hearing test-takers who are native English language speakers can use strategies that are auditorily based to determine the correct answer. They can fill in information based on unhampered access to the language; strategies that may be more difficult for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing test-takers.

Another issue that is faced in our community is that there are not enough Deaf Licensed Clinical Social Workers who can supervise other Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals with social work degrees to meet their hours to get a license. With that, Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing candidates have to communicate with hearing social workers through an interpreter and many of them do not understand Deaf Culture and how we address issues as a Deaf individual. Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing candidates prefer to have direct communication and for someone to understand their lived experiences.

The passing of this bill will address these issues and create more opportunities for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Social Workers to practice in the State of Maryland. Also, for the Licensing Board to explore alternative pathways for them to be licensed.

We look forward to a favorable outcome to SB 871.

MDAD Board of Directors

SupportSB0871-Massey.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Massey

Position: FAV

Michael Massey, PhD, MSW, M.Ed., Assistant Professor, Catholic University of America

Support for SB0871

I am a Professor of Social Work at Catholic University and a resident of Maryland. I am asking you to pass SB0871, which will immediately address the unnecessary harm that is being caused by the social work license exams and offer a way of finding a better path forward.

Right now, licensure exam requirements are needlessly keeping hundreds of qualified and ready social workers from serving their communities. We know this because the organization who creates and administers the national exam, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), final—after a 40 years of testing—released demographic exam outcome data. The results were worse than we thought—there are huge racial and other disparities that have allowed most white social work graduates to enter the field and left many social workers of Color out in the cold. From 2011-2021, white test-takers in Maryland passed the Masters level exam at a first-time rate of 93%, while Black test-takers passed at 56% rate and Hispanic/Latinos at a 79% rate. Clinical exam pass rates are similar, with rates of 89%, 54%, and 66% respectively. These exams are machines of racial inequality. They not only impact the lives and livelihoods of qualified social workers, they deny Maryland communities a diverse pool of social workers that can provide culturally responsive approaches and help alleviate the current mental health crisis.

You may be thinking, “Why should we lower standards just because there are outcome disparities? Doesn’t this result in unprepared and ineffective social workers?” In fact, fearmongers who oppose this bill will want you to believe this. However, this question is based on a false presumption—that licensure exam outcomes predict or are related to quality of practice. In fact, there is not a shred of evidence that such a relationship exists. In a recent white paper that examines clinical exams for Psychology, Clinical Social Work, Counseling, and Marriage and Family Counseling, Caldwell and Rousmaniere, found that “After more than 50 years of use, there remains no evidence that clinical exams in mental health care improve the quality or safety of that care.”

While these concerns have been voiced from the moment the exams became the national norm, ASWB has consistently withheld data and information that might have addressed them. In fact, when asked about releasing demographic outcome data in 2020, then ASWB CEO, Dwight Hymans, blatantly lied about it, claiming that “ASWB does not collect and thus does not release exam outcomes based on demographics.” Yet, magically, two years later, under immense pressure, they were able to release ten year’s worth of such data. Meanwhile, ASWB’s revenues steadily roll in—they now sit on over \$40 million in assets.

With overwhelming evidence of racial and other disparities in exam performance and no evidence that exams do what they are intended to do, there is no way to continue to justify their use. Eliminating exams would not be lowering standards, it would be acknowledging the false standards that are reinforcing racial discrimination and shortchanging our communities. Even without exams, social workers have a high bar for licensure. They must graduate from an

accredited school of social work, obtain thousands of hours of closely supervised practice, fulfill continuing education requirements, and get a criminal background check. Taken together, that is a more than adequate baseline of training and competence.

As a social work professor at Catholic University, I have seen excellent students graduate and immediately stagnate as they are denied jobs that they are qualified for. They put in the work and demonstrated time and again that they are ready to do the difficult and nuanced work that the job demands. Many of these students, who are mostly Black, want to go back to their own communities and serve people with whom they share background and culture. Yet, an exam that is unsupported by evidence keeps them from doing so. And we all are lesser for it.

SB0871 will immediately remove the exam barrier that is harming so many people in Maryland. It will also set up diverse workgroup to find a better, more fair licensure process. Passing SB0871 protects the public, helps Maryland, and moves us towards justice.

SB 871and 872-Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Nicole Smith

Position: FAV



March 8, 2023

The Honorable Chairwoman Melony Griffith
The Senate Finance Committee
Senate Finance Committee

RE: SB0871: Licensure Examinations - Moratorium and Workgroup/SB0872: Temporary License to Practice Social Work

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Madam Chair Griffith, Madam Vice-Chair Klausmeier, and esteemed Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to express support for SB871 and SB872. I am submitting this testimony as a licensed social worker on behalf of the Board of Child Care (BCC). My intention is to share how the current licensing regulations, specifically related to dependence on the Association of Social Work Boards exam to establish competency, have negatively impacted on our ability to deliver critical, culturally competent services to Maryland's most vulnerable families.

Board of Child Care is an independent, non-profit that provides youth and families with a broad continuum of treatment programs, including education, foster care, behavioral health, and therapeutic residential services. Last year BCC Served over 1300 families throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. Operating programs across state lines gives BCC a unique perspective of best practice in each area. BCC has programs in West Virginia where they have already adopted a temporary license to practice social work. Like the amendments proposed in SB0872, qualified individuals can practice under the supervision of an approved clinical supervisor while they are pending licensure.

Board of Child Care depends on the skill of qualified licensed social workers to meet both regulatory requirements and our treatment paradigm. Over the past three years, BCC has been challenged to employ licensed social workers at the Masters level (LMSW) and Advanced level (LCSW and LCSW-C), both critical to the operations of our programs. As a result, BCC has reduced capacity by nearly 50% in some of our programs. The reduction in treatment options places further strain on an already taxed system. This results in Maryland's youth having their treatment needs met in out of state programs or languishing in emergency rooms or other environments that are not designed to meet their medical conditions.

Several of my team members have experienced challenges in completing the licensing process after graduating with a MSW degree and/or meeting the requirements of advanced licensure specifically related to passing the ASWB test. Most have completed their internships at BCC or worked in other roles and are excited to continue their professional development and serve the youth and families within the program but are unable to pass the ASWB test even after multiple times.

There are vast disparities in social work licensure exam scores according to a report released by the ASWB in August 2022. The discriminatory trends noted in the test data mirror the experience of members of my team. Most of my teammates that have had to take the test multiple times are black and brown and for some, English is not their first language. They are disheartened by the process and have contemplated leaving the profession or working in a different helping capacity so they can do the work that are trained and committed to do.

In this current national workforce crisis, it is important that we remove any barriers to build Maryland's mental health workforce. In over 40 years of exam history, there is no evidence that the exam effectively assesses quality or safety of social work practice. These two bills allow otherwise qualified social workers to enter and advance practice, while the State develops an alternative practice-based assessment for licensing.

It is for these reasons that I respectfully ask for a favorable report on SB871 and SB872. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Nicole Smith, LMSW
Executive Director

Arrow SB871 testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Robert Basler

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 0871

Social Workers-Licensure Examinations-Moratorium and Workgroup

Finance Committee

March 10, 2023

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

I represent Arrow Child & Family Ministries, a multi-service non-profit that serves over 500 vulnerable youth and families in Maryland each year, some who have entered child welfare and others who are at risk of out-of-home placement.

Maryland is in the midst of two crises that put youth and families at risk: children's mental health and the hospital overstay and overall placement crisis. While each crisis has many contributing factors, a lack of qualified social workers is a driver of both. Many providers of services to youth, Arrow included, has seen the lack of qualified social workers negatively impact our ability to operate at full capacity. As a result, children and teens either stay in inappropriate placements or don't get needed services at all. The result is costly and damaging.

This would be bad enough if the root cause was qualified individuals were unwilling to enter the social work field, but we have learned that this is not the only reason. As has become increasingly clear, the use of a single exam as the key determinant of qualification for practicing as a social worker is problematic. This is especially true as we have learned about the incredibly disproportionate results of those tests and the impact on social work candidates of color, of those with disabilities and other differing abilities. Furthermore, the ASWE's response to these disclosures makes it clear that we need a new process for ensuring that Maryland has a robust and high quality social work workforce.

Arrow Child & Family Ministries asks this committee to give SB0871 a favorable reading.

SB871_SponsorAmendment

Uploaded by: Senator Mary Washington

Position: FAV



SB0871/303421/1

AMENDMENTS
PREPARED
BY THE
DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES

09 MAR 23
12:08:53

BY: Senator M. Washington
(To be offered in the Finance Committee)

AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 871
(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in line 2, after “**Workgroup**” insert “**on Social Worker Examination Requirements for Licensure**”; in line 4, strike “requiring the Maryland Department of Health to establish a workgroup” and substitute “establishing the Workgroup on Social Worker Examination Requirements for Licensure”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 4, in line 27, strike “The Maryland Department of Health shall establish a workgroup to:” and substitute “There is a Workgroup on Social Worker Examination Requirements for Licensure.”

(b) The Workgroup consists of the following members:

- (1) one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- (2) one member of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- (3) the Secretary of Health, or the Secretary’s designee;
- (4) the Secretary of Human Services, or the Secretary’s designee;
- (5) the Chair of the State Board of Social Work Examiners, or the Chair’s designee;

(6) the Chair of the Maryland Commission on Health Equity, or the Chair's designee;

(7) one representative of the Baltimore Legacy Chapter of the Association of Black Social Workers, designated by the Baltimore Legacy Chapter of the Association of Black Social Workers;

(8) one representative of the Maryland Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, designated by the Executive Director of the Maryland Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers;

(9) one member from the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, designated by the President of the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work;

(10) the delegate or alternate delegate who represents the State in the Delegate Assembly of the Association of Social Work Boards; and

(11) the following members, appointed by the Governor:

(i) two Deans of Social Work from accredited social work master's programs in the State, one of which shall be from a historically Black college or university;

(ii) three representatives from nongovernmental social service organizations that primarily work to support Western Maryland, Central Maryland, and the Eastern Shore, of who at least two shall be from organizations that have been impacted by the shortage of social workers; and

(iii) two individuals who received a master's degree in social work within the immediately preceding 5 years and who have been negatively impacted by

the examination requirement for licensure under Title 19 of the Health Occupations Article.

(c) The Governor shall designate the chair of the Workgroup.

(d) The Maryland Department of Health shall provide staff for the Workgroup.

(e) A member of the Workgroup:

(1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Workgroup; but

(2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

(f) The Workgroup shall:”.

On page 5, in line 1, strike “; and” and substitute a period; in line 2, strike “(3)” and substitute “(g)”; in the same line, strike “on” and substitute “On”; in the same line, after “2023,” insert “the Workgroup shall”; in the same line, strike “the” and substitute “its”; and strike in their entirety lines 6 through 15, inclusive.

Pressley Ridge _SB871_872_Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Simone Bramble

Position: FAV

March 9, 2023

The Honorable Chairwoman Melony Griffith
The Senate Finance Committee

RE: SB871 – Social Workers – Licensure Examinations – Moratorium and Workgroup AND
SB872 – State Board of Social Work Examiners – Temporary License to Practice Social Work
Position: SUPPORT

Dear Madam Chair Griffith, Madam Vice-Chair Klausmeier, and esteemed Members of the Senate Finance Committee, I am writing to express support for SB871 and SB872.

Pressley Ridge serves some of the state's most vulnerable youth and young adults. Each year nearly 8,000 children and families are strengthened primarily through services provided in their homes and community and, if needed, in an out-of-home setting. Pressley Ridge provides individuals and families with hope and support through life's challenges. We pride ourselves on partnering with families and meeting them where they are, when they need it most.

Since 1988, Pressley Ridge has been a leader in foster care and community-based mental health services in Maryland. In recent years, we have also added supportive services for transition-age youth, including workforce development and independent living programs.

Our mission to do whatever it takes to create success for children and families requires that we be in a state of constant readiness, with the workforce to do so. We employ licensed social workers to provide critical case management, behavioral health, and therapeutic services to meet the needs of children, youth, and families. The current delays at the Board of Social Work Examiners to process applications for licensure severely limits our ability and capacity to meet those needs. Private providers like Pressley Ridge are bound by a set of regulations that limits the number of children and youth a social worker can serve in our Treatment Foster Care and Independent Living programs, thereby hampering our efforts to support the state in placing youth in these programs. In the last year we have capped admissions to our programs due to the shortage of licensed social workers. Other like providers across the state have had to do the same, resulting in fewer home settings for youth.


SB872 will allow providers the opportunity to hire an applicant who has completed his or her required academic work, field education experience, passed the requisite background clearance and are simply waiting to take the licensing exam. Once hired, the employee will work under the supervision of a Licensed Certified Social Worker – Clinical (LCSW-C). This bill can be a tool for the Board of Social Work Examiners to eliminate delays and bottlenecks in the licensing process.

Last year, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) published data that highlighted disparities in the exam pass rates for different demographic groups. SB 871 seeks to responsibly study the contexts in which these disparities exist. In an effort to measure competency, social structural tools, like the social work exam, negates the lived experiences of its test takers and fail to recognize realities of marginalized communities.

A workgroup can provide critical analysis and transformation of the exam structure, ensuring that the perpetuation of power structures that advance and protect privilege, cease to exist, or at least are diminished. SB871 can transform patterns of social privilege and honor the profession's commitment to social change and social justice.

We at Pressley Ridge encourage a favorable report on SB871 and SB872. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Simone Bramble, LCSW-C, LICSW
Executive Director

Bill Response - SB871.pdf

Uploaded by: Stacey Benn

Position: FAV



Office of the President

**Morgan State University Testimony
Dr. David Wilson, President**

Senate Bill 871 (*Senator Washington*)
Social Workers - Licensure Examinations - Moratorium and Workgroup
Committee: Finance Committee
March 10, 2023

Favorable

Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and members of the Finance Committee. We, at Morgan, thank you for the opportunity to share our position on Senate Bill 871. The summary of the Bill states the following: *Altering the licensure examination requirements for social workers; and requiring the Maryland Department of Health to establish a workgroup to identify alternatives to examination requirements for a master social worker license, a certified social worker license, or a certified social worker-clinical license and develop recommendations for a certain assessment method to replace a certain examination requirement.*

Morgan State University is the premier public urban research university in Maryland, known for its excellence in teaching, intensive research, effective public service and community engagement. Morgan prepares diverse and competitive graduates for success in a global interdependent society.

Morgan State supports this bill because it addresses the bias exhibited in the social work licensing exam.

Given the increased need for social work professionals and to address issues of equity in the labor force, Morgan State University calls upon the state legislature and licensing board to implement the following action steps to determine an equitable solution to the disparate pass rates among Black and African American test takers.

- Declare a 2-year moratorium on the administration of the ASWB exam to examine the demographic and psychometric properties of the test associated with the disparities in pass rates;
- Issue Temporary Licenses during the 2-year moratorium period

- Increase access to all examination preparation resources by offering material at low to no cost;
- Eliminate test retake fee;
- Allow test takers to retake only the sections of the exam they did not pass;
- Provide feedback to test takers on the question and areas they did not pass; and
- Engage in restorative measures to compensate test-takers who have taken the test repeatedly.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that social work employment is projected to grow 9 percent from 2021 to 2023, with almost 75,000 positions open yearly. Morgan State University School of Social Work ranks 14th nationally in graduating Black and African American MSW students. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has continually accredited the department since 1975, whose accreditation extended to its MSW program, founded in 2007. Our students meet the criteria for graduation as required by our professional accreditation body, CSWE. Yet despite achieving the necessary professional competency, our students disproportionately enter the profession at a lower rung than their white counterparts who have passed the required licensing exam. This professional and economic trajectory follows them through their professional lives despite eventually passing the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) exam.

Despite claims of being statistically free of race and gender bias, in August 2022, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) released its demographic data revealing profound disparities among pass rates for first-time pass rates of the ASWB clinical licensure exam among Black and African American, Latino and Indigenous test takers when compared to their white counterparts. At 45%, less than half of Black and African American first-time test takers passed, in stark contrast to their White counterparts, 84% of whom passed on their first attempt.

Citing literature on the outcome of other professional licensure tests, ASWB posited that the reasons for disparities in test outcomes ranged from systemic issues, e.g., household income, poverty rates, and access to exam preparation resources, to individual issues such as stereotype threat – fears that performance on a task may confirm or reinforce preexisting negative stereotypes. Further, despite reporting the number of social workers who eventually passed the licensing exam, ASWB did not report the number of times a test taker took the exam before passing, nor did the organization report the cumulative cost of each attempt.

In response to these findings, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the National Association of Deans and Directors of Social Work Programs, (NADD), and the Clinical Social Work Association (CSWA) have issued statements. Each organization has called for reform, which includes deeper analyses of the outcome data and the test - its construction and validity.

These examinations continue to negatively impact the career trajectories of Black social workers at a time when the need for these practitioners in Maryland and nationally is dire. Senator Mary Washington has introduced SB871 in an effort to address these issues in line with several of our recommendations. We are prepared to provide oral testimony when this bill is brought forward for public comment.

Because of the positive considerations of SB871, Morgan supports this bill.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Wilson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. David K. Wilson
President, Morgan State University

SBtestimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Steven Acerno

Position: FAV

March 9, 2023

Senate Bill 0871

State Board of Social Work Examiners – License Examinations-Moratorium and Workgroup

Position: FAVORABLE

I am Steven Acerno, Director of the Treatment Foster Care program at The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region and current chair of The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY). MARFY is an association of private child caring organizations providing foster care, group homes, and other services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. The members of MARFY represent providers who serve Maryland's most vulnerable children who are in the foster care system due to abuse, neglect, severe mental health issues, and complex medical needs. The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region's Treatment Foster care Program serves youth with emotional/behavioral issues, medically fragile youth as well as teen mothers.

Last year the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) published a report that highlighted alarming outcome disparities among test takers. Overwhelmingly, test takers of minority groups failed the exam at a much higher rate. This issue can/will have significant negative impacts on the social work field if not addressed. Senate Bill 0871 will allow for the opportunity to develop a comprehensive plan to address concerns associated with the social work license exam. This bill allows otherwise qualified social workers to enter the social work field and address the current critical need of social workers in the state, while an identified workgroup assesses next steps in the exam requirements of the field. It is for these reasons that I respectfully ask for a FAVORABLE report on Senate Bill 0871. Thank you.



Steve Acerno, LCSW-C

SB871_MARFY_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Therese Hessler

Position: FAV



March 10, 2023

Senate Bill 871

Social Workers - Licensure Examinations - Moratorium and Workgroup

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) is an association of private child caring organizations providing foster care, group homes, and other services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. The members of MARFY represent providers who serve Maryland's most vulnerable children who are in out of home placements due to abuse, neglect or severe mental health, and medical needs. We operate group homes, treatment foster care programs and independent living programs, primarily serving the foster care population as well as a juvenile services population.

SB871 is a bill that aims to alter the licensure examination requirements for social workers in Maryland. The bill proposes to establish a workgroup that will identify alternative methods for assessing the qualifications of candidates seeking a master social worker license, a certified social worker license, or a certified social worker-clinical license. The workgroup will develop recommendations for a certain assessment method to replace a certain examination requirement. MARFY believes this bill is a critical step towards improving the social work profession in Maryland and ensuring that the state's residents receive high-quality social work services.

The proposed workgroup, which will include representatives from various groups, is a thoughtful approach to addressing the current and future demand for social workers in Maryland. By considering factors such as the availability of qualified candidates and the costs and benefits of different assessment methods, the workgroup can develop recommendations that will ultimately increase the number of qualified social workers in the state. The bill does not propose any changes to the existing licensure requirements for social workers in Maryland, but rather aims to explore alternative assessment methods that may be more effective in evaluating the qualifications of social work candidates. This approach shows a commitment to improving the licensure process without compromising the quality of social work services provided to Maryland residents.

By exploring alternative assessment methods for social work licensure, we know this bill has the potential to make a significant positive impact on the social work profession in Maryland. It is for these aforementioned reasons, that we politely ask for a FAVORABLE report on Senate Bill 871. Thank you.

For more information call or email:

Therese M. Hessler
301-503-2576 | therese@ashlargr.com

VR Written Testimony SB0871 and SB0872.pdf

Uploaded by: Victoria Rodriguez

Position: FAV

Dear Senators,

As a seasoned Social Worker with a preventive case management, therapeutic and leadership/management background, I am writing this to request your support for **SB0871 and SB0872**, which provides temporary licensing and a moratorium on using exams in the licensing process for Social Workers. States across the country are grappling with the profoundly discriminatory impact of biased licensing exams that have deprived Maryland of more than 1200 committed and competent mental health providers, specifically those of color, older, or global language speakers. Failing the test puts an undue financial and personal burden on these skilled professionals.

Also, the exams deny Marylanders the help they deserve, especially in communities of color where the need is growing. We must remove the undue barriers to their licensure. In over 40 years of exam history, **there is no evidence that the exam effectively assesses quality or safety of social work practice**. These two bills allow otherwise qualified Social Workers to enter and advance practice, while the State develops an alternative practice-based assessment for licensing.

When the exams excludes dedicated, compassionate and talented Social Workers from moving forward in their career, the quality of life for both the Social Workers and the residents in the Maryland are significantly impacted in the following ways:

- Increase of Maryland residents with unaddressed mental health and substance abuse disorders
- Decrease of accessible preventive measures and mental health emergency services in low-income communities
- Increased 911 calls
- Overcrowded ER rooms due to an uptick of behavioral health visits for mental health crises, substance abuse and/or psychotropic medication refills
- Extensive waitlists for Maryland residents to gain access to community mental health services
- Increased burnout and turnover amongst existing licensed Social Workers due to understaffing which leads to unsustainable work environments
- Disrupted service delivery/gaps in mental health services for Maryland residents due to overburdened caseloads, understaffed agencies and overworked existing licensed Social Workers
- Unlicensed and LMSW's often work multiple demanding jobs in efforts to keep up with the cost of living, while managing intensive caseloads and paperwork requirements while studying for the LMSW/LCSW/C exam which is not feasible, conducive or healthy
- Master Level Social Work Interns transfer their caseloads after a few months of direct service because once their internship is complete, they no longer meet the requirements necessary to carry out the same position until they pass the exam, which has perpetuated a cycle of premature termination, overburdening existing licensed Social Worker with transferred cases or placing vulnerable individuals on another wait list either internally or externally
- The lack of diverse representation in the field, often prevents marginalized community members for seeking out mental health services or sustaining mental health services due to existing health care disparities
- Ultimately, alternative pathways for Social Workers licensure is critical if we truly want to reform the efficacy of service delivery outcomes as to improve the quality of life for Maryland residents.

This is not an exhaustive list. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Victoria Rodriguez

Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Bracha Poliakoff

Position: FWA

I am writing to express my support for bills SB871 (with the amendment of the more diversified workgroup) and SB872. I am very concerned about the discrepancies in pass rates for individuals who are non-white, older, hard-of-hearing, etc.-The licensing exams do nothing to "protect the public" or ensure the integrity and quality of individuals entering the social work profession. What the exams actually do is demonstrate people's abilities to take a very specific type of test. I say this as someone who passed both the LMSW and LCSW-C the first time. I look at my passing as a combination of luck and privilege. There is a cultural component to thinking about things in a certain way. Many people who are excellent potential social workers have a hard time answering questions in a way that is so abstract and non-realistic as they are asked on the exam. The questions do not reflect real life at all (I have not used any of the information on the test in my real-life practice in the past 10 years!) and do not show who will be able to provide excellent social work services in the future. I would love to see additional research on these topics so a more effective way of licensing can be established retaining the professionalism and excellence of social work services in our state and nationwide. I think pausing the exams is the right thing to do while research is done in the workgroup to determine causes of these discrepancies and plan next steps. Thank you for considering a favorable vote on this legislation.

Bracha Poliakoff, LCSW-C

Pathways to Housing-SB0871-SB0872-Favorable-3-9-23

Uploaded by: Christy Respress

Position: FWA



March 9, 2023

To: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

From: Pathways to Housing DC

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

Position: Favorable

Pathways to Housing DC opened in 2004 when we brought the Housing First model to Washington, DC. We were thrilled to expand our services into Montgomery County, MD in 2018 with the receipt of a five-year innovation grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration that we called “Pathways Home”. Using a client-centered approach, our efforts target Montgomery County’s residents experiencing homelessness who are living with substance use and/or co-occurring mental health disorders whose service needs are not being met by existing programs. With recent expansions of outreach and housing programs in Montgomery County, Pathways to Housing DC is also responding to an increase in our Hispanic population where approximately 11% of our clients identify as Hispanic or Latino. Our program meets the needs of this community by ensuring that our services are available in both English and Spanish languages.

Pathways to Housing DC fully supports **SB0871 and SB0872**, which provide temporary licensing and a moratorium on using exams in the licensing process for social workers. States across the country are grappling with the profoundly discriminatory impact of biased licensing exams that have deprived Maryland of more than 1200 committed and competent mental health providers, specifically those of color, older, or foreign language speakers. Failing the test puts an undue financial and personal burden on these skilled professionals. Also, the exams deny Marylanders the help they deserve, especially in communities of color where the need is growing. We must remove the undue barriers to their licensure. In over 40 years of exam history, **there is no evidence that the exam effectively assesses quality or safety of social work practice**. These two bills allow otherwise qualified social workers to enter and advance practice, while the State develops an alternative practice-based assessment for licensing.

We have directly witnessed staff who our licensed social workers have assessed as qualified and competent be impacted by the use of the Association of Social Work Boards' exams.

For the reasons listed above, Pathways to Housing DC urges the committee to issue favorable reports for Senate Bills 0871 and 0872.



Christy Respress, MSW, President & CEO

Andre Pelegrini, MBA, Chief Operating Officer

Janelle Greene Smith, JD, M.Div., Vice President of Housing First

Gwendolyn A. Harter, LCSW-C, Director of Montgomery County Programs

Sara Brown, LCSW-C, Director of Veterans Services

SB0871 0872 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Ellen Line

Position: FWA

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to ask for your support for SB 0871 with amendments and SB 0872.

These bills address the biased exams (created by the ASWB) that Maryland law currently requires social workers to pass in order to be licensed to practice. The ASWB recently released statistics showing discriminatory pass rates based on race, age, and first language spoken.

Considering that passing these exams are effectively required to practice social work in Maryland, there is no place for *any* bias or discrimination in their pass rates. These bills place a moratorium on using the exam while a work-group is established to plan alternatives and create the option for the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners to offer a temporary license to folks who have struggled to pass the exam.

While it's proponents would say the exam ensures social worker competence and therefore greater safety for the public, there is no evidence that the exam effectively assesses quality or safety of social work practice.

This biased exam is effectively barring qualified social workers from being able to practice social work with no public benefit, when we are experiencing shortages of social workers across the state. I am a therapist in private practice and have maintained a waitlist of folks wanting to receive mental health therapy, since I started my practice in 2019. No one should have to wait months to see a therapist for necessary mental health care, and this exam has deprived Maryland of more than 1200 committed and competent mental health providers since it has been in use.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellen Line, LCSW-C". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ellen Line, LCSW-C
Founder and Clinical Social Worker
ROAR Wellness Co.

Untitled document.pdf

Uploaded by: Emanuel Wilkerson

Position: FWA

Emanuel Wilkerson's Testimony on Friday, March 10 for in favor of
SB0871: Social Workers - Licensure Examinations - Moratorium and Workgroup
SB0872: Social Workers - Licensure Examinations - Moratorium and Workgroup

Hello, thank you for reading my written testimony in favor of Bills SB0871 and SB0872.

Hello everyone. My name is Emanuel Wilkerson. I am a 25-year-old African American male unlicensed social worker. After 6 years of investing my time and money in higher education, I became the first in my family to attain a bachelor's and master's degree in social work. So today I will talk about the ASWB experience and I am in favor of these bills by sharing my personal story.

The ASWB has negatively impacted my life and stopped my career before it could even begin. I entered social work because I grew up seeing adults with degrees and licenses prove time and time again how ineffective they were at helping people in my community. I grew up with a speech impediment but still chose a speaking profession because my words, empathy, creativity, and ability to understand people called me to do great things in this field. I knew what it felt like to be in environments where no one shares your skin color and to be the victim of injustice.

So since the end of 2021, I studied for the exam while working full-time in my master's program. I utilized everything possible to achieve a passing score by studying for many hours a day for nearly a year. I spent thousands on test prep books, practice exams from their website that you have to re-purchase every time you retake it, and on the exam fee itself. I drained nearly all of my savings in the licensure process.

All of this resulted in me failing the exams 3 times and losing several job offers with agencies looking to hire me post-grad school. I was out unemployed for months following graduation. I was unable to support myself financially. For 2 years now my father has been in the hospital from a stroke and I am unable to support my mother with the hospital bills. This degree I invested 6 years of my life is useless due to the test.

I could have chosen some other field like communication or psychology and be allowed to do many human services jobs in MD, but I specifically choose social work to make a real difference for marginalized people. Now I am not allowed to work with people at all because I cannot pass a racially biased examination. I am being punished for wanting to help my community. There are many, many stories like mine since about half of Black MD social work graduates are unable to pass this exam on the first try, versus over 90% of white social work graduates.

Now I know what some of you are thinking "If you failed the test then you are not meeting the standards of the social work profession. That's what the exam is for." But I ask whose standard am I not meeting? Who makes those scenario questions and decides the answers on the exam? Social work is a varied and diverse field of practice that helps human beings who are

equally varied and diverse. No exam will ever reflect that. No social worker treats their practice the same if you did treat them the same then you are not “meeting the client where they’re at”.

To conclude

The social work profession says it wants people like me - people of color and people with lived experience, but it utilizes a licensing exam that has a clear bias against people like me. If anyone disagrees with me, I ask you to explain those numbers on ASWBs data reports. If you are able to. To see some social workers want to keep the exam where it stands even after the data shows clear gaps in representation is laughable and hypocritical to all CSWE 9. Please support these bills Mary Washington is advocating for because my life is suffering for no reason.

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Jordan Bridges Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Jordan Bridges

Position: FWA

SB871 and SB 872 Testimony

As a student pursuing a masters in social work and potentially various licenses, I am here today to urge you to support Senate Bills 871 and 872. The obvious disparities visible in the pass rate data contradict everything the social work profession stands for. The knowledge I've gained surrounding the ethical responsibilities of a social worker does not align with the disregard for equitable treatment as it relates to the workers experience. From the perspective of someone who works with the Department of social services in foster care, clients need workers who know and understand their experiences. My first day on the job I inquired about the process of licensing and I'll tell you what my supervisors and their supervisors told me: You can take the exam and pass, but you will have to take it as if you're not yourself. They informed me that I would have to adopt the perspective of someone who wasn't aware of our clients' realities to be recognized as a licensed social worker. While the turnover continues to increase, the amount of regulated workers continues to fall. Allowing qualified social workers to enter and advance practice, while the State develops an alternative practice-based assessment for licensing helps to mitigate the impacts of discriminatory regulations on not only workers, but clients who have been deprived of competent care. Thank you.

NASW Maryland - 2023 SB 871 FWA - Social Worker Wo

Uploaded by: Judith Schagrin

Position: FWA

**Senate Finance Committee
March 10, 2023**

Senate Bill 871: Social Workers – Licensure Examinations – Moratorium and Workgroup

*****SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS*****

Maryland’s Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers represents social workers across the State of Maryland. As diverse members of the profession and the Chapter, we join with our colleagues to ask for a favorable report for Senate Bill 871 - Social Workers – Licensure Examinations – Moratorium and Workgroup **WITH AMENDMENTS**.

Throughout our nation’s history, justice has been sought against discriminatory practices in education, training, and professional practice. Baltimorean and Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall championed the notion that justice is not served through “separate but equal” measures. Such measures have been proven to create further division and have damaging consequences for generations to come.

The call for a moratorium on licensing examinations creates a separate path to licensure that will unintentionally economically disadvantage Maryland licensees, especially those already experiencing oppressive and burdensome bias-based barriers in their careers.

Forty years ago, the social work profession won a hard fight to compete and to be respected like other Maryland health occupations that demonstrate competency and earn public trust through the rigor of licensing standards for training, education, and examination. A moratorium on licensing exams without considering unintended consequences will undermine public trust in the credibility of social work licensees and eliminate the only legally recognized measure of competency in Maryland social work practice.

Therefore, we ask for your support to fulfill the charge of the former president of both the National Urban League and National Association of Social Work and Master of Social Work, Whitney Young’s quote about civil rights; we want “equal, but better”. To fully mitigate injustice in licensing examinations, vote yes to support a workgroup to identify diverse, anti-oppressive, and appropriate licensing examination requirements and testing vendors for a master social worker license, a certified social worker license, and a certified social worker–clinical license under Title 19 of the Health Occupations Article. To avoid ‘separate but equal’, we ask for an amendment to strike the moratorium on licensing exams.

We further support the work group facilitated by MDH. To complete, the work members must have the breadth of experience and knowledge necessary to determine competency for independent social work practice, something consumers and new graduates don’t have. To that end, we recommend membership include the following: at least one faculty member or dean from an accredited school of social work; at least one faculty or dean from an accredited historically Black college and university’s school of social work; at least three representatives from governmental and nongovernmental social service agencies; at least two non-traditional professionals who may have entered the social work field later with lived experience or as a second career; at least two test-takers who identified as needing

testing accommodations; at least three master of social work or bachelor of social work graduates who have been negatively impacted by the examination requirement; at least two consumers who have been impacted by the shortage of social workers; at least one member of the State Board of Social Work Examiners, at least one member of the National Association of Social Workers; at least one member of the National Association of Black Social Workers; at least one member of the current examination vendor; at least one member of the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights and any additional members the Department considers necessary to create a diverse group of stakeholders on the workgroup.

We urge you to vote in favor of Senate Bill 871 with our proposed **amendments to reject the proposed moratorium on licensure examinations and make changes in the workgroup's composition.** A compilation of concerns from our members about the unintended consequences of a moratorium is attached. Damaging the social work profession will damage those the bill most wants to help.

Legislative Committee

National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter

Concerns and Questions about testing from the National Association of Social Workers Legislative Committee

Social work has worked hard since its inception in the early 1900's to establish itself as a profession, a struggle that continues to this day. The myths that what social workers do is take away children and give out money prevail, despite our now being the greatest provider of behavioral health services in the country and recognized for our contributions in any number of settings, including hospitals, schools, community centers, non-profits, assisted living facilities, the military, child welfare, and adult protective services. Along with direct care, social workers are also active in crafting legislation and social policy, as well as serving in administrative positions in numerous public and private organizations.

Social work wasn't recognized as a profession in Maryland until 1975, when the Social Work Statute was finally passed. Title protection for social workers was a hard fought win by a small and diverse group of determined social workers who persevered over several years. Bringing social workers in line with other professions - law, psychology, medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, licensed certified professional counselors and so on - the statute required the education and training to acquire a body of knowledge, commitment to ethical practice, and a licensing examination.

Fast forward to the release of the disturbing – yet not surprising - data by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) showing alarmingly disparate outcomes based on race, age, and those for whom English is a second language. We share a sense of urgency to stop the harm. However, we believe we must proceed in a thoughtful manner that both provides a quick response to the ongoing systemic bias and oppression in standardized testing, and also maintains recognition and respect for the social work profession. A consistent theme as we talk with Maryland social workers statewide is the fear of losing ground, and the plea that any proposal be critically evaluated for its implications for social workers' hard fought recognition as professionals.

If the proposed bills are in response to addressing and mitigating disparity in testing measures, detailed below are a selection of questions and concerns from our membership to consider when proposing changes to how one enters the social work profession or earns advanced licensure and the impact of these changes on the profession in Maryland.

- Some expressed concern that temporary licensing could create a two tiered profession - those social workers licensed by testing and those with a temporary license. The disproportionality will emulate the ASWB test results, resulting in licensing via testing for a predominantly White group, and temporary licensure for a predominantly Black and Brown group, older students, and non-native English speakers. This is unacceptable.
- How will having a temporary license affect portability of our social work license when moving to another state? Or a social work compact with other states?
- Will those with temporary licenses be eligible for insurance reimbursement, a necessity for employment as a mental health therapist?
- How can we avoid the perception of delegitimizing our profession by creating a temporary license? This will not harm White people the same way it harms Black and Brown people, those whose first language is not English, and those with diverse abilities.

- After acquiring the Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW), many social workers aspire to earn advance licensure - Licensed Certified Social Worker – Clinical (LCSW-C) by completing the practice and supervision requirements to sit for the examination. How will a temporary license affect that professional goal?
- Will employers be leery of hiring a social worker whose temporary license may lapse in two years? On-boarding new staff is costly and disruptive to client care.
- In areas such as child welfare and forensics, social workers with advanced licensure are accepted as expert witnesses in court, also a hard fought win for social work. Has the impact on that credential been considered?
- Given the possibility of public perception that requirements are being diluted - which can create economic disenfranchisement for those who are already marginalized - what will the impact be on social workers' ongoing struggle for adequate salaries and compensation?
- Will this bill create barriers and encourage employers to hire other behavioral health professionals instead? Without an examination requirement, public and private employers may avoid hiring social workers, questioning the quality of social work graduates and their ability to think critically and to do the work.
- What are alternative measures to address oppression rather than focusing singularly on the examination? A state-wide survey to glean licensees' concerns and suggestions could prove illuminating.
- What is the data for other professional exams, for example, nursing, physical therapy, or lawyers? Do they show similar racial and age-related discrepancies? What have legislators proposed to address disparity in other fields? Is there a precedent by other recognized professions for eliminating the licensing examination?

We emphatically support ensuring that none of the licensing requirements in Maryland support racial bias. But waiving testing requirements in favor of a 2 year temporary license doesn't touch the real problem - the ASWB's flawed and biased testing measures. Testing for licensure is how professions establish that those who enter have a body of knowledge and the competence to do the work. The ASWB - and likely all regulatory boards- needs to be held accountable for revamping the examination and eliminating the bias.

Before substantially altering entry into the social work profession without considering the issues outlined above, our social work membership has strongly urged a workgroup of no more than 1 year to develop thoughtful recommendations and a plan to execute in 2026. Examples of recommendations that could emerge include those below - some of which ought to be pursued sooner rather than later.

- Expand opportunities for no cost test preparation courses offered by social work professionals with a proven track record of success coaching MSWs and LMSWs to pass the examination
- Create a state fund to defray or more ideally pay the cost of retaking the examination as a means of compensating for the test bias forcing Black and Brown MSWs and LMSWs as well as those with diverse abilities to shoulder a larger financial burden than their White colleagues to become social workers
- Require accommodation for diverse learners.
- Require the Board of Social Work Examiners (BSWE) to annually report the number of people who apply to take each exam from different groups and the pass rates for each group and if

- possible, disaggregate first-time vs. retakes. Also include income as one of the demographics collected and reported on.
- Provide students with the study materials and practice exams at no cost; this \$85 purchase is reported by some as a significant aid to successful exam preparation
- In the current Social Work Practice Act it reads, “The examinations given under this subtitle shall strive to be free of cultural bias.” Add racial bias and require the Board to report on how it is meeting this requirement.
- Require engaging a consulting firm to create a validated, nondiscriminatory entrance exam
- Allow the option of an oral examination and consider offering the exam in multiple languages
- Rather than eliminating the exam or providing a temporary license, require the testing vendor demonstrate how it will strive to be free of cultural or racial bias

In closing, we deeply appreciate the attention to our profession and a commitment to remedying the alarming bias inherent in the ASWB examination required for social work licensure. However, there are grave concerns about the potential for unintended consequences that may undermine and damage the social work profession - in short, to hurt more than help in the long run. The very real potential for creating two tiers of social work professionals is among the unintended consequences that are especially troubling.

We believe that these questions and concerns must be considered before legislative changes are made to the requirements for our profession. We support legislation mandating the formation of a workgroup to thoughtfully consider our steps forward to eliminate testing bias. We are also hopeful that in the meantime, there are short-term steps that will be taken, especially identifying public funding for repeat testing.

MGA March 9 2023.pdf

Uploaded by: Kyle Berkley

Position: FWA

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.

SB871 and SB872.pdf

Uploaded by: Lynda Davis

Position: FWA

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am a Licensed Certified Social Worker-Clinical (LCSW-C). I am urging you to support SB 0872 and SB0871 with an amendment that would make the exam continue to be available to applicants on an optional basis.

These bills provide temporary licensing and a moratorium on using exams in the licensing process for social workers. States across the country are grappling with the profoundly discriminatory impact of biased licensing exams that have deprived Maryland of more than 1200 committed and competent mental health providers, specifically those of color, older, or foreign language speakers.

Failing the test puts an undue financial and personal burden on these skilled professionals. Many have spent thousands of dollars in their attempts to pass, while working in lower income jobs because of the lack of a license.

While the exams clearly create undue barriers to licensure disproportionately affecting applicants of color, in over 40 years of exam history, there is no evidence that the exam effectively assesses quality or safety of social work practice.

These two bills allow otherwise qualified social workers to enter and advance practice, while the State develops an alternative practice-based assessment for licensing.

Neither of these bills ends social work licensure. Even without exams, there are substantial requirements for licensure, including graduation from a nationally accredited school—which includes hundreds of supervised hours of fieldwork, thousands of hours of supervised practice, and a background check. This is a sufficient baseline to ensure that social workers are prepared to practice safely and equitably.

As a white social worker, I passed the exam on the first go-round. I believe it was my race that privileged me in regard to the exam and that this does not make me a “better” social worker. My former colleague who is African American did not pass the exam on the first go-round. However, I believe she was and still is a much more competent and skilled Social Worker than I am.

Most importantly, the exams deny Marylanders the help they deserve, especially in communities of color where the need is growing and where cultural connection to clients is essential. Over a thousand social workers are missing from Maryland’s workforce. If all test-takers passed at the same rate as white test-takers from 2011 to 2021, we would have 1227 more licensed social workers in Maryland (see: [Association of Social Work Boards exam pass rates by state/province](#)).

We cannot continue to allow this exam to keep competent, compassionate social workers from serving those in need. The alarming outcome disparities, along with ongoing issues of validity, prove that the exams are needlessly perpetuating inequality,

keeping social workers from making a living and advancing in their profession and keeping the community from getting vital services.

It is for all of these reasons that I urge you to pass SB 0872 and SB0871 with an amendment that would make the exam continue to be available to applicants on an optional basis.

Sincerely,

Lynda Davis, LCSW-C
Linthicum, MD

Written Testimony 3.9.23.pdf

Uploaded by: Maria Smith

Position: FWA



March 9, 2023

To: Senator Melony Griffith, Chair, Senate Finance Committee

Re: Letter of **Support** for **Senate Bills 0871 + 0872**

SB0871: Social Workers - Licensure Examinations - Moratorium and Workgroup

SB0872: State Board of Social Work Examiners - Temporary License to Practice Social Work

Dear Chair Griffith and Maryland Senate Finance Committee Members,

My name is Maria F. Smith, MSW, LCSW-C, LICSW, and I am writing to request **support** for **SB0871** and **SB0872**, which provide temporary licensing and a moratorium on using exams in the licensing process for social workers, while forming a task force to develop long-term solutions.

Over the past 10+ years, I have worked in a number of different organizations with a wide variety of colleagues in both Maryland and Washington, DC. While working at Catholic Charities DC back in 2016, it was determined that **all** employees with social work degrees become licensed to remain employed. At that time, I distinctly remember hearing supervisors share fears of needing to let go of hard-working, dedicated, culturally-competent, linguistically-diverse staff who were English as a second language speakers. Most of these staff members had been front-line workers for years, and faced risk of losing their jobs (and livelihood) if unable to pass a biased social work licensing exam only offered in English. Around this same time, as a young, white, English as a first language speaking woman, I was able to pass my graduate licensing exam on my first attempt. I do not believe I was a more competent social worker. In fact, in many ways, I was likely less competent than my colleagues of color, due to my limited worldview and experiences.

Since 2016, I have continued to witness Black, Latinx, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and older individuals, who have **all** successfully obtained social work degrees, be barred from entering or advancing in the social work profession, due to difficulty passing the current social work licensing exams. As a 31 year-old, white, English-speaking, U.S. born, Hearing woman, I am part of a demographic of people with social work degrees who pass the social work licensing exams often on the first attempt, at both the masters and clinical level. I am also part of a

demographic of people most likely to hold a greater amount of societal privilege and often but not always, less likely to fully understand cultural implications in social work practice.

It is vital that specific short-term and long-term solutions are identified to this grave injustice, such as those proposed in SB0871 and SB0872, in order to rectify harm already caused to my colleagues who are often more qualified to speak to and understand the nuances of cultural differences pertaining to older adults, immigrants and children of immigrants, African American people, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing folks.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Maria F. Smith, MSW, LCSW-C
Rockville, Montgomery County, Maryland
maria@inclusivetherapy.org
Inclusive Therapy

Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Philicia Ross

Position: FWA

Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Philicia Ross, I am a LMSW and I live in district 23. I fully support bills SB871(with the amendment of the workgroup, keeping the moratorium in place) and SB872 and am asking for the Committee members to vote favorable. I graduated with my Masters of Social Work in 2019 and in this short period of time can attest to the great harm I have gone through as a result of having the barrier of the exam. For the first year of my social work journey I was trying to find work. This was perplexing to me because of the amount of work I had done to graduate. By the time I was awarded my Masters, I had already completed 2 years of internship by a Clinically trained board certified social worker for a CSWE approved internship program. I did this internship work for no pay, utilizing my own resources and familial support systems. My dismay came when I realized I was denied paid work because I could not pass a licensure exam. Not because I wasn't qualified in education, after all I passed a CSWE approved program. Not due to lack of passing a background check. Not even being disapproved of by my Clinical supervisor, only an exam.

This exam did not reflect any of my experiences as a competent social worker nor test on accurate details of what I would actually do as a social worker. The hundreds of dollars and hours I spent in my higher learning was not enough to prepare for this exam, which the ASWB states to be a "measure of competency". Instead my education was geared towards actual, practical experience and the exam was geared towards measures of safety that were very clearly white washed, and in some cases culturally unethical. What I do as a black, queer, larger bodied, woman when I interact with someone who has similar experiences like me as a social worker was not represented in those questions. In fact, I was prepped to think "like a heterosexual white woman" which is incredibly harmful to the psyche and not a value that social work says it stands on in terms of diversity, inclusion, and social justice. In fact, the ASWB is a third party who states they stand on the same values of social work but has continued to pump harm into the field for capitalistic gain over the ethics that social work was founded on. As a member of the NASW I am disheartened that nothing has been done about this sooner.

I have noticed in other states like Illinois and California that not having an exam from the ASWB, and having equitable paths to licensure has increased social workers over 80% AND has helped eased the mental health and public health crisis for which social workers are often at the front lines of but never fully recognized for. These bills would be a gateway for Maryland social workers to be able to follow suit and ease a public and mental health crisis that we are seeing everywhere but very particularly in Maryland through substance use, lack of programs for our teens & youth to be engaged, and adults in the most marginalized of spaces. I hope that the Finance Committee stands on the side of the people, ALL people who represent this field, and not on the side of capitalistic gain that continues to aid the workforce shortage but continues to harm our most vulnerable populations.

Thank you,

Philicia Ross, LMSW

R Doyle SB871.872 written testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel Doyle

Position: FWA

To: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

From: Rachel Doyle, LICSW

Re: SB871 and SB872

Position: Favorable

Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I am writing to you as a lifelong Maryland resident, a human services professional for almost 20 years, a social worker for over a decade, and a clinical supervisor for the past 5 years. **I urge you to support SB871 with the workgroup amendment and SB872.**

In August 2022, the Association of Social Work Boards, which writes social work licensing exams, [released data](#) showing what social workers already knew colloquially – these exams are biased and gatekeep talented BIPOC, older, and non-native English speakers out of our profession. **ASWB claims that their exams “protect the public” and assess for baseline competence and safety, but there is no proof behind these claims.** We as a nation are grappling with a mental health crisis brought on by Covid-19 and a workforce shortage. By keeping out talented social workers, ASWB exams are in fact harming the public, and they are harming our most vulnerable Maryland residents. Even the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) said on February 3, 2023, that [it opposes ASWB exams](#) because of the glaring pass rate disparities.

As a graduate of University of Maryland, Baltimore School of Social Work, I paid special attention to the [pass rate disparities](#) of my alma mater. The pass rate disparities are gaping for white social workers and Black social workers – from 2018-2021, there was a difference of 27.8% at the master’s level and 24.3% at the clinical level. Even though this is better than the national averages, it is still a large gap and disparities exist between white social workers and other racial groups as well. I am here to tell you that this is not an accurate reflection of the students I sat next to while I was in school. I learned a lot from my BIPOC colleagues, they were excellent future social workers, and it is a travesty that I was more likely to pass the exam simply due to my race.

Rather than use this data to reflect on their perpetuation of discrimination, ASWB has doubled down. They have not shown that they are willing to be collaborative partners to ensure that everyone who has otherwise completed rigorous social work requirements has equal opportunity to become a social worker. Therefore, the only solution is to pause the harm that the ASWB exam causes in the State of Maryland, then find a better path forward that does not discriminate on the basis of race, age, English language speaker status, or Deaf/Hard of Hearing status.

Some opponents of these measures worry about insurance reimbursement rates. This worry is not based in fact. Insurance companies are only concerned with licensure, not whether passing a test was part of licensure or not. When the ASWB exams were new, many social workers were exempted from taking the exams but still allowed to obtain full licensure. Some of these social workers are still in practice today. There is no evidence that they receive lower reimbursement rates or that their practice

is less competent or safe.

Others worry that eliminating the exams delegitimizes our profession. I speak for a large number of social workers when I say that I am not willing to throw my BIPOC, older, non-native English speakers, and Deaf/Hard of Hearing colleagues under the bus in the name of a test that provides artificial legitimacy to our profession. I do not know a single social worker who thinks these tests are a good measure of competence – at best, they are a silly and expensive hoop to jump through, and at worst, they keep great social workers out of our profession. We need to confront racism wherever we can; social work can be a pioneer, bringing greater legitimacy to our profession by eliminating these exams. Clients will see that we are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and they will be more comfortable coming to us because of it. For anyone who feels the exams are an important part of their own licensure path, there is nothing in the bill language that precludes social workers from taking ASWB exams.

There has been a lot of misinformation about Illinois, which has been a pioneer in reducing the influence of the ASWB in their state. The truth is that they had a surge of over 2,000 competent social workers when they dropped the master's level exam requirement, and there was no corresponding increase in complaints to their licensing board. The master's level initiative has been so successful that there is current legislation introduced to find a permanent non-exam path for clinical licensure. Maryland now has the opportunity to also be a pioneer in addressing ASWB's systemic discrimination.

SB871 and SB872 will allow us to immediately pause the harm of these discriminatory examinations. It will allow Maryland to address an enormous workforce shortage. It will give our talented BIPOC, older, non-native English speakers, and Deaf/Hard of Hearing social workers the opportunity to do what they do best – empower and serve Maryland residents. Then, we will have a diverse taskforce that will allow us to find a better assessment tool than harmful ASWB exams. Thank you for your favorable vote.

Sincerely,
Rachel Doyle, LICSW

Will Doyle-SB0871 _ SB0872 Testimony-3-9-23.pdf

Uploaded by: William Doyle

Position: FWA

March 9, 2023

To: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

From: Will Doyle, LICSW

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

Position: Favorable

I have been a Maryland resident since 2010. I have been a licensed social worker since 2008 and a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker in Washington, DC since 2013. I have worked in homeless services in Washington, DC since 2006.

I fully support **SB0871 and SB0872**, which provide temporary licensing and a moratorium on using exams in the licensing process for social workers. Both bills are urgently needed to address the discriminatory barrier of the Association of Social Work Boards' exams that the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners currently require for social work licensure. After many years of pressure, the Association of Social Work Boards released pass rate data covering the years of 2011 to 2021 on August 5, 2022. This data revealed incredible disparities in pass rates by race, age and those for whom English is a second language. I have included first time pass rate data showing a Masters Exam pass rate of 55.5% for Black test takers as compared to 92.8% for white test takers. Other pass rate disparities are also startlingly bad.

As a direct result of the use of these incredibly flawed exams, **Marylanders have been deprived of 1,227 licensed social workers**. The data I have attached shows how these exams have directly caused workforce shortages. In turn, these shortages have caused harm to the public due to the related unmet needs. I have personally witnessed how the mental health workforce shortage has harmed my family, friends and neighbors.

You will hear testimony from the Association of Social Work Boards, but they will not take any accountability for their exams. Instead, they will insist that their exams are needed to ensure social work competence and public protection. However, despite over 40 years of use, **no evidence of correlation between passing the Association of Social Work Boards' exams and both social work competence and public protection has ever been produced**. They will also not mention that their CEO, in a December 21, 2020 letter to social work deans and directors, stated that the "ASWB does not collect and thus does not release exam outcomes based on demographics". I have attached the full statement in my testimony. Based on their subsequent release of 10 years of such data, this has proven to be an incredible lie. Additionally, despite being a nonprofit, the Association of Social Work Boards increased their net assets by over \$22 million in the period from 2011 to 2020, reflecting how they profit through their monopoly on social work licensing despite their flawed and biased exams. I have also included an attachment presenting this data.

You will hear testimony indicating that removing the Association of Social Work Boards' exams will cause harm to the public and some may try to present Illinois' removal of the Masters Exam as an example. However, their example has already led to thousands of additional licensed social workers to address their own workforce shortage and was only done after they determined that **bachelors and masters level social workers don't pose a significant risk to the public**. I have included an interview with NASW Executive Director, Joel Rubin, as evidence.

You will hear testimony against these bills from NASW-MD. This is despite the national NASW stating on February 3, 2023 that "The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) opposes the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) social work licensing exams after a review of ASWB data shows significant disparities in pass rates for prospective social workers of color, older adults, and those who speak English as a second language." I have attached their statement to my testimony. SB071 and SB0872 are consistent with opposing the Association of Social Work Boards exams, so **opposition from NASW-MD puts them in opposition to their own national organization**.

Other national social work organizations, namely The Council on Social Work Education and the National Association of Deans and Directors Schools of Social Work, have made strong public statements calling for the removal of the Association of Social Work Boards' exams from social work licensure requirements. The Council on Social Work Education sent letters to each state's social work licensing board. I have included both statements with my testimony.

Requiring social work licensing exams at the bachelors and masters level is redundant. I urge you to consider the following social work education requirements as evidence of the sufficiency of degrees without exams at those licensure levels:

The Counsel on Social Work Education (CSWE) is responsible for the accreditation of bachelors and masters social work programs. The CSWE [utilizes](#) (1) a competency based approach to assess student "ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes to practice situations in a culturally responsive, purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being." Accredited social work programs educate students within the framework of the following 9 competencies:

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
2. Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice
3. Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice
4. Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice
5. Engage in Policy Practice
6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
8. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
9. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

The competencies are related to the practice of social work rather than strictly objective information that can be assessed through multiple choice exams. These competencies are

developed and assessed through the field education components of social work programs. Bachelors level graduates complete a minimum of 400 supervised field education hours and Masters level graduates complete a minimum of 900 supervised field education hours.

Besides the Association of Social Work Boards' exams as part of social work licensure, Maryland has significant requirements that adequately promote the goal of social work competence and public protection. Please consider the following requirements in assessing their efficacy:

The Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners requires that applicants for Licensed Bachelor Social Worker (LBSW) have a bachelors degree in social work from a CSWE accredited program. To maintain licensure, LBSWs need to renew their license every 2 years. To qualify for renewal, they need to complete at least 30 continuing education hours. LBSWs are required to practice under a social work supervisor unless approved by the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners for independent practice. While under supervision, LBSWs need to receive a minimum of 3 hours per month or 1 hour for every 40 hours work of face to face supervision by a registered and board approved supervisor. To qualify as a supervisor, one must be licensed as an LCSW or LCSW-C for at least 18 months and complete either a masters level course in supervision or 12 hours of supervision training. An LBSW can apply for independent practice status after completing 3 years of active licensure, 4,500 hours of work experience, and 150 hours of face to face supervision by a registered and board approved supervisor.

The Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners requires that applicants for Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) have a masters degree in social work from a CSWE accredited program. To maintain licensure, LMSWs need to renew their license every 2 years. To qualify for renewal, they need to complete at least 40 continuing education hours. LMSWs are required to practice under a social work supervisor unless approved by the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners for independent practice. While under supervision, LMSWs need to receive a minimum of 3 hours per month or 1 hour for every 40 hours work of face to face supervision by a registered and board approved supervisor. To qualify as a supervisor, one must be licensed as an LCSW or LCSW-C for at least 18 months and complete either a masters level course in supervision or 12 hours of supervision training. An LMSW can apply for independent practice status after completing 3 years of active licensure, 4,500 hours of work experience, and 150 hours of face to face supervision by a registered and board approved supervisor.

The Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners requires that applicants for Certified Social Worker (LCSW) have completed at least 3,000 hours of supervised social work experience over at least 104 weeks. Applicants also must receive at least 100 hours of supervision as an LMSW and therefore need to have completed all related requirements for licensure at the LMSW level. Supervision must be provided by a registered and board approved supervisor. To qualify as a supervisor, one must be licensed as an LCSW or LCSW-C for at least 18 months and complete either a masters level course in supervision or 12 hours of supervision training. To maintain licensure, LCSWs need to renew their license every 2 years. To qualify for renewal, they need to complete at least 40 continuing education hours.

The Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners requires that applicants for Certified Social Worker-Clinical (LCSW-C) have completed at least 3,000 hours of supervised clinical social work experience over at least 104 weeks. This must be direct service to clients, with at least 1,500 hours being face to face client contact. Applicants also must receive at least 100 hours of supervision as an LMSW and therefore need to have completed all related requirements for

licensure at the LMSW level. Supervision must be provided by a registered and board approved supervisor. To qualify as a supervisor, one must be licensed as an LCSW-C for at least 18 months and complete either a masters level course in supervision or 12 hours of supervision training. The content of supervision must [include](#) (2) "assessment, formulation of a diagnostic impression, and treatment of mental disorders and other conditions and the provision of psychotherapy." Applicants must also have completed at least 12 credit hours in clinical courses from a CSWE accredited social work program. To maintain licensure, LCSW-Cs need to renew their license every 2 years. To qualify for renewal, they need to complete at least 40 continuing education hours.

All licensed social workers are listed in an online database available to the public [here](#) (3) and are subject to oversight by the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners. The Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners maintains a process to receive complaints against licensed social workers [here](#) (4). The National Association of Social Workers defines the [Code of Ethics](#) (5) for the social work profession. Maryland also has its own [Code of Ethics](#) (6) for social work.

Professionally, I manage a Housing First program in Washington, DC that provides case management services to over 500 individuals who currently or previously experienced chronic homelessness. I have directly witnessed staff who I as a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker have assessed as qualified and competent be impacted by the use of the Association of Social Work Boards' exams. After obtaining Masters in Social Work degrees to advance their careers and increase their social work competence, they failed the Association of Social Work Boards' exam and were no longer eligible to work in Washington, DC. Despite the DC Council providing historic funding for housing vouchers to make great strides in ending chronic homelessness in 2021, we continue to struggle in 2023 with using these funded resources due to the barrier of the Association of Social Work Boards' exams. Since COVID started in March 2020, we have had 74 unlicensed bachelors and masters level social workers apply to work as Case Managers. However, due to being unlicensed we could not consider them for work in Washington, DC. We have been attempting to hire masters level social workers since September 2022 to serve as supervisors who could aid us in ending homelessness for 125 more individuals. However, with the workforce shortage caused by the Association of Social Work Boards' exams, we have been unable to hire despite consistent hiring efforts and the offer of bonuses. As a result, we have homeless individuals dying while waiting for available staff.

For the reasons listed above, I urge the committee to issue favorable reports for Senate Bills 0871 and 0872.

Sincerely,



Will Doyle, LICSW
College Park, MD
District 21

Links to Source Documents

- (1) <https://www.cswe.org/getmedia/94471c42-13b8-493b-9041-b30f48533d64/2022-EPAS.pdf>
- (2) https://health.maryland.gov/bswe/Pages/Licensing_Requirements.aspx
- (3) <https://mdbnc.health.maryland.gov/bsweverification/default.aspx>
- (4) <https://health.maryland.gov/bswe/Pages/Complaint.aspx>
- (5) <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>
- (6) <https://dsd.maryland.gov/Pages/COMARSearch.aspx#Default=%7B%22k%22%3A%22social%20work%22%2C%22r%22%3A%5B%7B%22n%22%3A%22dsdFullTitleName%22%2C%22i%22%3A%5B%22%5C%22%2C%7%82%2C%7%82737472696e673b233130202d204d6172796c616e64204465706172746d656e74206f66204865616c7468%5C%22%22%5D%2C%22o%22%3A%22and%22%2C%22k%22%3Afalse%2C%22m%22%3Anull%7D%2C%7B%22n%22%3A%22dsdFullSubTitleName%22%2C%22i%22%3A%5B%22%5C%22%2C%7%82%2C%7%82737472696e673b233432202d20424f415244204f4620534f4349414c20574f524b204558414d494e455253%5C%22%22%5D%2C%22o%22%3A%22and%22%2C%22k%22%3Afalse%2C%22m%22%3Anull%7D%2C%7B%22n%22%3A%22dsdFullChapterName%22%2C%22i%22%3A%5B%22%5C%22%2C%7%82%2C%7%82737472696e673b233033202d20436f6465206f6620457468696373%5C%22%22%5D%2C%22o%22%3A%22and%22%2C%22k%22%3Afalse%2C%22m%22%3Anull%7D%5D%2C%22i%22%3A1033%7D>

MD ASWB First Time Pass Rates

Bachelors Exam Pass Rates (2011-2021):

| Demographic | Group | # test-takers | Pass rate |
|----------------|------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Race/Ethnicity | Asian | 7 | |
| | Black | 189 | 39.7% |
| | Hispanic/Latino | 40 | 67.5% |
| | Multiracial | 12 | 50.0% |
| | Native American/Indigenous peoples | 0 | |
| | White | 235 | 77.9% |
| Gender | Men | 61 | 63.9% |
| | Women | 437 | 60.9% |
| Age | 18 - 29 | 294 | 65.3% |
| | 30 - 39 | 106 | 54.7% |
| | 40 - 49 | 59 | 54.2% |
| | 50 and older | 39 | 59.0% |
| Language | English | 464 | 62.5% |
| | Non-English | 34 | 44.1% |

Masters Exam Pass Rates (2011-2021):

| Demographic | Group | # test-takers | Pass rate |
|----------------|------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Race/Ethnicity | Asian | 218 | 82.1% |
| | Black | 2,708 | 55.5% |
| | Hispanic/Latino | 458 | 79.3% |
| | Multiracial | 207 | 85.0% |
| | Native American/Indigenous peoples | 14 | 78.6% |
| | White | 4,198 | 92.8% |
| Gender | Men | 907 | 74.8% |
| | Women | 7,092 | 79.0% |
| Age | 18 - 29 | 4,495 | 83.0% |
| | 30 - 39 | 2,094 | 75.8% |
| | 40 - 49 | 919 | 69.0% |
| | 50 and older | 495 | 66.1% |
| Language | English | 7,564 | 79.4% |
| | Non-English | 439 | 62.4% |

Clinical Exam Pass Rates (2011-2021):

| Demographic | Group | # test-takers | Pass rate |
|----------------|------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Race/Ethnicity | Asian | 104 | 84.6% |
| | Black | 1,129 | 54.1% |
| | Hispanic/Latino | 195 | 65.6% |
| | Multiracial | 99 | 87.9% |
| | Native American/Indigenous peoples | 7 | |
| | White | 2,905 | 88.6% |
| Gender | Men | 503 | 75.5% |
| | Women | 4,035 | 79.1% |
| Age | 18 - 29 | 1,405 | 86.8% |
| | 30 - 39 | 1,982 | 79.8% |
| | 40 - 49 | 687 | 67.7% |
| | 50 and older | 466 | 65.9% |
| Language | English | 4,347 | 79.4% |
| | Non-English | 193 | 62.2% |

MD ASWB Eventual Pass Rates for 2011 to 2021 (from <https://www.aswb.org/exam/contributing-to-the-conversation/aswb-exam-pass-rates-by-state-province/>)

| Bachelors Exam | | | | | | |
|----------------|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------|--|------------------------|
| Actual Data | | | Adjusted Data | | | |
| Demographic | Group | # Test-Takers | Pass Rate | # Passed | # Passed (White Pass Rate) | Missing Social Workers |
| Race/Ethnicity | Asian | 8 | | | | |
| | Black | 203 | 44.3% | 90 | 169 | 79 |
| | Hispanic/Latino | 41 | 68.3% | 28 | 34 | 6 |
| | Multiracial | 12 | 58.3% | 7 | 10 | 3 |
| | Native American/Indigenous Peoples | 0 | | | | |
| | White | 237 | 83.1% | | | |
| Gender | Men | 65 | 67.7 | | | |
| | Women | 452 | 65.0% | | | |
| Age | 18-29 | 291 | 71.1% | | | |
| | 30-39 | 120 | 60.8% | | | |
| | 40-49 | 59 | 55.9% | | | |
| | 50 and older | 47 | 53.2% | | | |
| Language | English | 482 | 66.6% | | | |
| | Non-English | 35 | 48.6% | | | |
| Masters Exam | | | | | | |
| Actual Data | | | Adjusted Data | | | |
| Demographic | Group | # Test-Takers | Pass Rate | # Passed | # Passed (White Pass Rate) | Missing Social Workers |
| Race/Ethnicity | Asian | 239 | 87.0% | 208 | 232 | 24 |
| | Black | 3,043 | 70.8% | 2,154 | 2,958 | 803 |
| | Hispanic/Latino | 471 | 89.0% | 419 | 458 | 39 |
| | Multiracial | 216 | 90.3% | 195 | 210 | 15 |
| | Native American/Indigenous Peoples | 15 | 86.7% | 13 | 15 | 2 |
| | White | 4,248 | 97.2% | | | |
| Gender | Men | 990 | | | | |
| | Women | 7,462 | | | | |
| Age | 18-29 | 4,429 | | | | |
| | 30-39 | 2,306 | | | | |
| | 40-49 | 1,063 | | | | |
| | 50 and older | 658 | | | | |
| Language | English | 7,945 | | | | |
| | Non-English | 511 | | | | |
| Clinical Exam | | | | | | |
| Actual Data | | | Adjusted Data | | | |
| Demographic | Group | # Test-Takers | Pass Rate | # Passed | # Passed (White Pass Rate) | Missing Social Workers |
| Race/Ethnicity | Asian | 107 | 93.5% | 100 | 103 | 3 |
| | Black | 1,233 | 77.6% | 957 | 1,190 | 233 |
| | Hispanic/Latino | 201 | 88.6% | 178 | 194 | 16 |
| | Multiracial | 103 | 92.2% | 95 | 99 | 4 |
| | Native American/Indigenous Peoples | 7 | | | | |
| | White | 2,959 | 96.5% | | | |
| Gender | Men | 522 | 87.9% | | | |
| | Women | 4,196 | 91.2% | | | |
| Age | 18-29 | 1,361 | 97.8% | | | |
| | 30-39 | 2,038 | 93.4% | | | |
| | 40-49 | 753 | 83.3% | | | |
| | 50 and older | 568 | 74.8% | | | |
| Language | English | 4,514 | 91.4% | | | |
| | Non-English | 206 | 79.1% | | | |
| | | | | | Missing Bachelors Social Workers (LBSW) | 88 |
| | | | | | Missing Masters Social Workers (LMSW) | 883 |
| | | | | | Missing Clinical Social Workers (LCSW-C) | 257 |
| | | | | | Total Missing Social Workers | 1,227 |



Newsletter Vol. 30 No. 6

December 21, 2020

An open letter to social work deans and directors

Editor's note

On November 9, 2021, ASWB's Board of Directors unanimously approved a motion to gather, analyze, and release examination performance data. The motion directs ASWB staff and its consultants to develop a plan to implement this information-sharing initiative, which is anticipated to include performance data broken down by demographic group for our member jurisdictions as well as schools of social work. Read [ASWB's Board of Directors approves initiative to release examination performance data](#) to learn more.

ASWB's primary service to our members is development and administration of the licensing exams. In providing that service, ASWB is committed to developing and administering licensing exams that fairly measure minimum competence.

Several member boards have recently received inquiries from deans and directors of social work programs in their state asking about availability of data showing pass rates on ASWB exams broken down by demographics. ASWB has met with some member boards and representatives from social work academic programs to address the concerns and questions they have raised. ASWB has also created a web page, [Measuring competence fairly](#), that provides information, videos, and materials outlining the steps that are taken in the exam development process to

ensure fairness. We encourage all of our members to visit the web page. I would like to share with our member boards some perspective and thoughts on these recent inquiries in the form of a letter to the deans and directors. If any member boards would like additional information or desire to have ASWB attend a meeting of your state or provincial board, please let us know.

Dear Deans and Directors,

During 2020, the issue of racial injustice resulting from institutional racism has been prominent throughout the United States, Canada, and the world. Anyone would be hard-pressed to have missed the Black Lives Matter movement and its emphasis on this important issue and the need for change. And evidence is clear that institutional racism remains in many, if not all, systems in our society and negatively affects people of color.



Dwight J. Hymans, MSW, LCSW,
ACSW ASWB Chief Executive
Officer

With the increased movement to enact changes to modify or eliminate the systems that create disparities based on race, the ASWB exams have come under increased scrutiny. That scrutiny has taken the form of additional pressure to provide data showing whether outcomes on the licensing exams vary based on demographic differences.

By now most of you are aware of the policy ASWB has followed since the inception of the organization in 1979. **ASWB does not collect and thus does not release exam outcomes based on demographics.** It is the written policy of ASWB as directed by the ASWB Board of

Directors. We explained our process and policy in a letter sent in February to the president of the National Deans and Directors in response to NADD's initial request for this information. Nevertheless, for the past several months many of you, individually and collectively, have been asking our member boards for this data and asking whether individuals sitting for the exams have an equal chance

of being successful. The unstated assertion is that people of color do not have an equal opportunity and that the exams are biased.

ASWB follows a rigorous process to guard against bias in individual exam items (questions). The social workers involved in this process are primarily volunteers from diverse practice areas, geographic locales, and demographics. From the time exam questions are written by trained item writers, and before the questions appear as scored items on one of the exams, they undergo a stringent evaluation process. This process includes review by social work consultants who work directly with the item writers and review by Exam Committee members—themselves former item writers. This evaluation process looks at many aspects of an item, including indicators of bias. In addition to subject matter experts providing subjective analyses, psychometricians conduct objective analyses using industry-standard statistical tools. One part of the psychometric analysis determines whether varied groups have an advantage or disadvantage in determining the correct answer for that item. ASWB removes any item that shows this type of differential item functioning. This item-by-item analysis is done to assure an equal opportunity. This process is the same method used in any credible high-stakes standardized exam and is consistent with established industry standards.

ASWB's responsibility is to provide services to our members as they work to accomplish their mandate of protecting the public. ASWB's primary service to our members is development and administration of the licensing exams. In providing that service, ASWB is committed to developing and administering licensing exams that fairly measure minimum competence. The exams must be reliable, valid, and legally defensible to ensure that the licensing boards and regulatory bodies that use the exams can stand behind them when a license to practice social work is awarded to an applicant. ASWB answers to the state and provincial member boards who govern the association and determine our bylaws and leadership. They must—and do—hold ASWB to a high standard.

That same mandate of protecting the public drives the work of ASWB. And it provides direction in deciding what the association can and should do within the boundaries of that mandate. ASWB's responsibility to our members doesn't

preclude responding to requests from nonmember organizations. But it does mean we must first ask whether the request is within ASWB's mandate and whether the information we provide is usable data that can help individuals and those assisting them in preparing for the licensing exam and professional practice.

During an earlier time in my career, I spent 15 years teaching and directing field placement programs in three different social work academic programs. I experienced the challenge of preparing students for the profession. Recognizing the challenges for educators, ASWB is currently looking at some data points that are available and can be aggregated in a manner that may be helpful to academic programs. We are also in the process of reconfiguring current resources available to assist in preparing for the exams in a new, less expensive format.

While many believe that ASWB is a social work organization by virtue of its name, the entirety of the name clearly indicates that ASWB is a regulatory organization. As such, ASWB is accountable to the members of the association: the regulatory bodies in 64 states, provinces, districts, and territories. Based on the purpose and use of licensing exams and the data currently collected, ASWB wants to be sure that any information shared with the social work community is first accurate and second appropriate for use in this manner. ASWB is committed to exploring options that meet these criteria.

| ASWB Financial Information | | | |
|----------------------------|---|----------------------|---------------------|
| | | | |
| Taken from: | https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/222414510 | | |
| | | | |
| Year Ending December | Total Revenue | Total Expenses | Net Income |
| | | | |
| 2020 | \$16,234,758 | \$13,237,385 | \$2,997,373 |
| 2019 | \$17,595,886 | \$14,857,969 | \$2,737,917 |
| 2018 | \$16,344,808 | \$13,645,258 | \$2,699,550 |
| 2017 | \$15,565,636 | \$13,254,089 | \$2,311,547 |
| 2016 | \$13,767,709 | \$12,604,039 | \$1,163,670 |
| 2015 | \$13,964,190 | \$11,244,788 | \$2,719,402 |
| 2014 | \$12,692,553 | \$9,867,582 | \$2,824,971 |
| 2013 | \$11,492,614 | \$9,120,837 | \$2,371,777 |
| 2012 | \$10,279,908 | \$8,782,127 | \$1,497,781 |
| 2011 | \$9,461,425 | \$8,457,538 | \$1,003,887 |
| | | | |
| Average | \$13,739,949 | \$11,507,161 | \$2,232,788 |
| | | | |
| Total | \$137,399,487 | \$115,071,612 | \$22,327,875 |
| | | | |
| | Net Assets as of 12/31/20: | | \$33,841,553 |

The Social Work Podcast

Provides information on all things social work, including direct practice (both clinical and community organizing), research, policy, education... and everything in between.

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2023

Eliminating the ASWB exam from the Illinois LSW law: Interview with Joel Rubin, MSW, LSW, ACSW, CAE



[Episode 133] Today's episode of the Social Work Podcast is an interview with Joel L. Rubin, MSW, LSW, ACSW, CAE about the legislative process that NASW-IL went through to eliminate the requirement that BSW and MSW graduates from accredited social work programs in Illinois had to take the ASWB licensing exam in order to get their LSW.

Joel has served as the Executive Director of the 5,000 member Illinois Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) since October of 1999.

He shares the story about how and why the legislation changed. We talked about how the legislative process works, from connecting with other social workers online about pressing issues, to reaching out to NASW staff and volunteer board members, supporting prospective legislative candidates, meeting with your elected officials and how NASW state chapters serve as a resource for social workers and legislators.

Download MP3 [27:33]

0:00 / 27:33

Transcript

Introduction

Jonathan Singer: Hey there podcast listeners, Jonathan here. Today's episode is about how a bill becomes a law. It is about how States regulate social workers. About how social work organizations gatekeep who gets in and who is kept out. It is the story of how the ASWB was written out of Illinois law for basic social work licensure. Now, this story makes a little more sense with some context. On February 3, 2023 the National Association of Social Workers put out a press release (<https://www.socialworkers.org/News/News-Releases/ID/2611/NASW-Opposes-Association-of-Social-Work-Boards-ASWB-Exams>) saying that they opposed, "the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) social work licensing exams after a review of ASWB data shows significant disparities in pass rates for prospective social workers of color, older adults, and those who speak English as a second language."

Now, one of the implications of the largest social work organizations in the world saying NO to the ASWB exam is that they had to take a stand on something that social workers have long wanted - the ability to provide protected services across state lines. Dozens of other regulated professions like psychology and nursing are able to practice across state lines. The desire for an interstate compact intensified during the pandemic when most social workers and many clients discovered online mental health services. Now, the press release said that "NASW is prepared to oppose the Social Work Interstate Compact Legislation being developed by the Council of State Governments (CSG) if the bill is not substantially improved, including the removal of provisions which codify the ASWB exams. NASW is eager to work with CSG to develop multi-state social work practice legislation."

So, does this mean that NASW is against licensure exams? No. Does it mean that NASW is against interstate compacts? No. What it means is that the current ASWB social work licensure exam basic licensure has some real problems. And those problems were exemplified in the pass rate data that ASWB released in August 2022. ASWB released those data after years of organizations like the National Association of Deans and Directors, NASW national and state chapters, and individuals such as Matt DeCarlo and others publicly requested ASWB release their pass rate data. After the ASWB pass rate data were released, several social workers authored a Change.org petition called, ASWB: End Discriminatory Social Work Licensing Exams.

The petition was authored by Tay D. Robinson, DSW, CSW; Charla Yearwood, LCSW; Shimon Cohen, LCSW; Alex Remy, LCSW; Brit Holmberg, LCSW; Jen Hirsch, LMSW, APHSW-C; Matt DeCarlo, PhD, MSW; Gerald Joseph, MSW, ACM, CTP; Kim Young, LCSW; Cassandra Walker, LCSW CTP; Sierra M. Wetmore, MSW; Bethany Matson, MSW. As of February 12, 2023 10,147 people had signed it.

In today's episode, I was able to talk to Joel Rubin, President of NASW Illinois. Because what they did in Illinois was really interesting. They advocated for the ASWB exam to be eliminated for basic licensure in Illinois for social workers who graduated with bachelor's or masters degrees from accredited schools of social work. Now, it's important for you to know when you're listening to this episode that there are some people who are opposed to licensure and regulation of social workers period.

Cornier & Bell's Encyclopedia of Social Work entry on ASWB notes that regulation of social workers to protect citizens from harm while receiving services from professionals extends back to 1934, when Puerto Rico passed the first statute regulating social work. California passed social work practice regulation in 1945. By 1992, all 50 states, the District of

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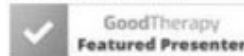
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ABOUT THE SOCIAL WORK PODCAST

The Social Work Podcast provides information on all things social work, including direct practice (both clinical and community organizing), research, policy, education... and

Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands passed social work regulation. Comer & Bell noted that opponents of regulation saw it as "elitist, exclusionary, discriminatory in requirements, restrictive to the available workforce, cumbersome, expensive, and duplicative (Bibus & Boutté-Queen, 2011; CSWE, 2018; Garcia, 1990). Macro practitioners involved with community organizing, planning, and administration have criticized licensure and regulation as favoring clinical practice over macro practice (CSWE, 2018; Donaldson, Fogel, Hill, Erickson, & Ferguson, 2016; Donaldson, Hill, Ferguson, Fogel, & Erickson, 2014; Hill, Fogel, Donaldson, & Erickson, 2017)." The National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW), founded in 1968, immediately registered opposition to social work licensure because it would establish "an elitist hierarchy within the profession." Licensure would exclude paraprofessionals and baccalaureate social workers employed in community and indigenous programs, who understood and practiced with cultural competence. To learn more about the NABSW, check out Episode 38 of *Doin' the Work* podcast where Shimon Cohen interviews Mr. Garland Jagers & Dr. Denise McLane-Davison.

This episode does not argue against licensure. It argues against requiring an graduates of accredited social work programs taking a flawed exam to be licensed in Illinois. This is also different from being a license clinical social worker. In Illinois, the clinical ASWB exam is still required for the clinical licensure.

What does it mean for social workers who graduate from accredited BSW and MSW programs to become licensed social workers without having to take an exam? What does it mean for the general public? Why and how was a bill that eliminated the ASWB master's level exam as a requirement for licensure in Illinois able to move from an idea to signed legislation in a single legislative session?

So, sit back and enjoy the story of how Illinois got rid of the ASWB exam for basic social work licensure. And along the way, you're going to learn a little bit about how a bill becomes a law. And if in this moment, you are thinking of that Schoolhouse Rock cartoon from 1976, then you're my kind of people. I was six that thing came out. And it forever changed the way I understood the rough and tumble process of getting an idea to become a bill to become signed legislation. And Joel's story is going to talk a little bit about that. About how the legislative process works, from connecting with other social workers online about pressing issues, to reaching out to NASW staff and volunteer board members, supporting prospective legislative candidates, meeting with your elected officials and how NASW state chapters serve as a resource for social workers and legislators.

And so, without further ado, on to episode 133 of the Social Work Podcast: Eliminating the ASWB exam from the Illinois LSW law: An interview with Joel Rubin.

Interview

0:07:17

Jonathan Singer: Joel, thanks so much for being here today on the Social Work podcast. What's the story behind NASW Illinois advocating to eliminate the ASWB exam for Master's level licensure?

0:07:30

Joel Rubin: It's quite a story, Jonathan. First of all, thank you for having me on the podcast today. So I think to put it all in perspective, I'm going to go back a couple of years. And so this is basically in the fall of 2020. The association of Social Work Boards ASWB informed Illinois that the state was out of compliance with their testing standards and that bachelor's level social workers BSWs would soon no longer be able to be eligible to take the exam required for the LSW.

Okay? Both here in Illinois. In Illinois, the LSW exam is for BSWs with the proper supervision and MSW, it's non clinical level licensure. So that basically left the state with two options. And the first of these options was that we could have created a new BSW license that utilized the ASWB bachelor's exam. Now, that new license would have had a smaller scope of practice than the current LSW, basically upending existing bachelor's level LSWs.

The chapter in NASW Illinois opposed this action. A second option was that the state could stop licensing BSWs altogether, which effectively would make Illinois an MSW only profession. And we also post that option now. So we looked at these options, we were faced with these options, and we began to ask ourselves this following question is the ASWB exam absolutely necessary for LSW licensure? Now, that's a significant leap, a very, very significant leap that perhaps was asked in the past, but we decided to ask it, and we basically started to really inquire about what would that entail.

And so when we looked at that, we started to look at several states, including California, that don't require the ASWB exam for basic licensure. So in addition to that, in discussions with our Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, IDFPR, they indicated that data showed that this population, meaning basic licensed social workers with the non clinical level of licensure, posed very little risk to the public.

And that rigorous pre and post graduation supervision requirements, coupled with existing Illinois requirements of the words that and we all know this, that all LSWs that engage in clinical social work have to be working under the auspices and control of an LCSW. So this really created an environment where additional testing became unnecessary. So when we sort of it was sort of this AHA moment. This is coupled with the fact that for many years, both NASW Illinois and NASW on a national level and other stakeholders across the country had repeatedly requested that data be released from ASWB, because we began, and we've heard for years, or this, ancillary evidence that the ASWB test disproportionately harms social workers based on minority demographics. So this was sort of the background. Now, mind you, this was before, this past summer when ASWB released their initial data on first time test taker.

0:11:51

Jonathan Singer: So that was summer of 2022 when ASWB released the data that people have been asking for a long time. And it created this firestorm where people were like, AHA, the proof is in the pudding. You're releasing your own data and you're showing that pass rates for white test takers are in some cases double that of black test takers.

0:12:13

Joel Rubin: Correct. And we break that down. In Illinois, it was broken down. So this was proof that this was a significant, challenging situation. So put this all together. We felt that the state would be better off by actually removing the ASWB test for the LSW level of licensure, because it would continue to serve as a burden to access for many, many social workers in the state. Now, we had heard over the years from people all the time, I've tried to take not the clinical level licensure, but just the LSW level of licensure.

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ABOUT YOUR HOST

Jonathan B. Singer, Ph.D., LCSW

I'm a Professor of social work at Loyola University Chicago and a licensed clinical social worker who specializes in working with children and families. My Twitter handle is @socworkpodcast. I have always been an advocate of technology. In the 1990s, I created a number of "first" Web sites for social service agencies in Austin, Texas. In 1996 I developed the first electronic medical record for my agency, ATCHMR, leading to my involvement in the selection and pilot testing of the first agency-wide remote EMR program. From 1996 - 2002 I worked for ATCHMR as a

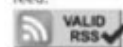


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I've tried 1, 2, 3, 4 times to pass the test, and then people just give up. And that has such an impact on all kinds of things. It has impact on social workers not being regulated. It has impact on someone's career path and also making sure that we have a more diverse workforce, workforce here in the state of Illinois.

0:13:25

Jonathan Singer: So it sounds like NASW Illinois for a long time had been concerned about the ASWB exam, hearing from folks in the field who had gone through accredited schools of social work, had passed and then not been able to pass the licensure exam. And then there was this kind of ironically pressure from ASWB to do something different. And NASW Illinois decided, well, we're going to essentially think outside the box and say, maybe we don't need this. So how did you move from NASW Illinois saying, we want there to be a change to actually having this be legislation that ended up being signed?

0:14:10

Joel Rubin: So, as I said earlier, after many discussions with IDFP and IDFP, noting that data shows that the LSW level of licensure does not pose that significant risk to the public. And after hearing all these things from our members for years, we decided to connect with two incredible sponsors of this legislation two social workers that are in our Illinois General Assembly that's Representative Lindsey, the Point of Chicago and State Senator Karina Via, who's a school social worker from the western suburbs of Chicago.

And we basically had a bill that more or less said was keeping the LSW level of licensure in place, but just removing the test. Okay, one of these things where and this doesn't usually happen with legislation, legislation sometimes can take 1235 long time to get passed. And then after it gets passed, it's a lot different than what you initially started out with. We introduced this legislation in early 2021, the early part of the session, and it passed both House chambers, both chambers in the Illinois General Assembly and then was signed by Governor Pritzker in August of 2021. This is Senate Bill 1632. So it's an incredible sort of an achievement on this as well.

And it went into effect January 1, 2022. Now, what this has done and what have we seen so far? So basically what the bill did, obviously it removed the ASWB exam, but it also allows Illinois BSW a continued path to licensure and employment in the profession. It removed a significant burden to access that disproportionately affects BIPOC communities and social workers without resources to pursue an MSW.

It removed yet another financial strain on recent MSW graduates and BSWS, and that is BSWS who have already completed their three years of postgraduate supervision by waiving the exam and exam prep cost associated with licensure. It also created a logical path for MSWs to becoming LSWs while collecting their required supervision hours to become a licensed clinical social worker. I can tell you that I get that question almost daily from people.

The chapter gets these questions all the time. Should I get my LSW or should I just wait to get my LCSW? What this does is it brings in a whole cohort of people now that are regulated by the state, which I think is really, really important, the importance of licensure, and I think we need to be really clear here, is that we're talking about the initial level of licensure, we're not talking about testing here.

And then lastly, too, and this is another point that this makes is that it creates a much needed path for macro level social workers to be legally called a social worker in the state of Illinois title that they've earned and entitled to carry. So this has been a significant probably in the many years that I've been with NASW, I have never encountered the more positive feedback from social workers about a significant piece of legislation.

And I can say that since the law went into effect January 1, there have been probably a couple of thousand people that have become LSWs under this new, under this new rule.

0:18:29

Jonathan Singer: So it sounds like the process for getting this legislation passed was a little different than other legislative processes in the sense that it was faster. Why do you think that was so?

0:18:45

Joel Rubin: I would say there are a couple of reasons. One is that first of all, we have the NASW Illinois chapter has a significantly strong presence in Springfield, a really good reputation in sort of relating to legislators from all different backgrounds. That's one. Two, I think we had two very motivated sponsors, both social workers. One state Rep. Lindsey the .1 state Senator Karina Via And lastly, the issue around social workforce, and this is really a workforce issue in many ways, is that we've been very focused in, in Illinois on getting a sense of what are the barriers to advancement in the social workforce, diversifying the social work workforce and issues around licensure have been a major barrier.

In fact, we had one grant funded study that we did in conjunction with Liability University of Chicago School Source to work on this issue. And we're right now finishing up another study on diversifying the pipelines of the profession. So I would say that those three kind of points sort of all came together sort of a perfect storm in many ways. Plus, I think the timing, I think there's a real recognition in our General Assembly and in the state that we need to have a really good and diverse mental health workforce and obviously social workers play a significant part of that mental health workforce.

0:20:39

Jonathan Singer: So you said you had two really strong sponsors. What does it mean in terms of the legislative process, in terms of getting legislation through committees and pass to have strong sponsors? What do they do and how do you cultivate that?

0:20:56

Joel Rubin: So one of the most important things that we do on a regular basis is that we encourage social workers to be involved in the political process. Election comes around. Legislators that are candidates that are running for office, that support social work values, these are people we need to support. And by doing that and also by being available to all these elected officials as content experts, this all helps when you want to pass legislation because a lot of times elected officials will come to an advocate, will come to NASW to say, hey, what do you think about this bill?

Or hey, someone came to me with this issue. What do you think about this? That just doesn't happen out of thin air. That happens because you do a lot of hard work working with people from the time that there are even candidates not even in

bilingual social worker providing individual, family and group therapy to children and families. From 1997 - 2000 I was co-owner of a group therapy practice specializing in conjoint family therapy. From 2002 - 2004 I was the lead therapist for Jewish Family Service and an adjunct instructor at the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work. As an adjunct at UT-Austin, I developed and taught the school's first Crisis Intervention course. Between 2009 and 2015 I was an assistant professor of Social Work at Temple University. I write for academic and popular publications.

View my complete profile



office. You put that all together and that's really part of the legislative process. We're mandated in our code of Ethics and Standard 6.4 to do that. So it's not anything that shouldn't be new to social workers.

It's that we just tend to think that someone else is going to do it. And the legislation that we got passed regarding the removal of the ASWB test is real proof of how that cultivation and support works.

0:22:42

Jonathan Singer: So you were able to support these folks to become part of the legislature and what did they do in the process of getting a bill passed into legislation? Like what is their role?

0:23:02

Joel Rubin: Their role is to work with other legislators together with NASW to get sponsors for a bill to make sure that a particular bill gets through a committee. It's a whole process in Springfield and having that understanding, it in support of people who are on certain committees. If a bill goes to a certain committee for a hearing to be familiar with the people on that committee, that all is part of working with different legislators and having relationship with them as well.

0:23:45

Jonathan Singer: Joel, I really appreciate you talking through the process that NASW, Illinois went through. To sort of think about not having the ASWB exam, the legislative process. And so for folks who are listening, who are kind of excited about being able to make changes at the policy level, legislative level, what are some recommendations that you have for ways they can get involved? Things that folks can do, social workers can do to make this kind of macro level change?

0:24:17

Joel Rubin: Well, first thing what social workers can do is they can join NASW. That's always an important step and it's not a cliché, but our strength is in our numbers. We have over 5000 members in the state of Illinois. We could easily have 8000 or 9000 members. So that's really important.

0:24:41

Jonathan Singer: And one of the things that's important about that, right, is that when you can tell a legislator we're representing 8000 folks, 8000 professionals, right, paid professionals who are doing this are students, then that's different than we're representing 100 people, right?

0:25:00

Joel Rubin: And generally what we say is that we represent many more than our membership because we are and a lot of people, even nonmembers, would say, oh yeah, it's great, they're doing a great job, and all that. So I think the second thing is that when someone gets an action alert from NASW about anything, it could have been about the LSW law, but it could be all kinds of legislation. Please answer it. It has never been easier to respond back to something because we generally provide people with ready made letters that you can either edit to send to all your elected officials.

You can do it from the comfort of your couch, on your phone, or whatever device you prefer. It's never been easier. That's really, really important. Thirdly is getting involved with the chapter, whether it's here in Illinois or other chapters across the country, getting involved, running for a position on the board of directors, a leadership position for students. And in here in Illinois, and this is similar to other states, is that we have a very active student liaison network that involves all social work programs here in the state of Illinois that meet monthly. And they're very involved in coordinating our annual advocacy day, which a lot of states have.

We are still waiting. We hope that we're going to be back live in 23 we don't know yet. It all depends on a lot of things. But that's a really great opportunity for people to sort of see things in action, how things work in Springfield, how things work in your state capital. But those are some real basic things that and also that when we ask people is that it's also important when you're contacting your legislature is you don't always have to go to Springfield. You can always contact or even meet with them in their district office, which is actually a preferable place to meet people. It's less hectic, there's less distractions. There's a lot of opportunities for that as well.

0:27:19

Jonathan Singer: That's great. So if I had an idea, right, something that I was seeing in my practice, something that was kind of chatter amongst my social work colleagues that I thought, this is kind of an issue that seems to be broadly problematic. What's the best way to kind of move forward with that visa vis what you're talking about?

0:27:47

Joel Rubin: So a really focused way today in which it gets obviously you can contact me directly, you can contact our legislative director Kyle Hillman directly or people on our volunteer leadership. But one of the most effective ways that people communicate to the chapter or within the member, within the social community is through our MyNASW community. It's a community digest that people posted at all time, but we have people posted about all kinds of issues from third party reimbursement to testing to referrals to all kinds of things. And we're very responsive, as all NASW chapters are, we're very responsive to our members. So if you contact us, we're going to get back to you. So that is one of the clearer ways to reach out to us as well.

0:28:54

Jonathan Singer: Well, Joel, thank you so much for being on the podcast and talking with us about NASW Illinois legislative win and the process of being involved at the policy level. I really appreciate it.

0:29:08

Joel Rubin: Thank you, Jonathan. And feel free anyone, to reach out to me at NASW. My email address is jrubin.nasw@socialworkers.org, and I appreciate this opportunity to be on your podcast. Thanks.

Transcription by deciphr.ai

Bio

Joel L. Rubin, MSW, LSW, ACSW, CAE has served as the Executive Director of the 5,000 member Illinois Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) since October of 1999. He has over 25 years of non-for-profit management and fundraising experience, including extensive work with boards of directors, committees and volunteers, and advocacy

around a wide variety of social work, human service and international political issues, as advocating on behalf of social work workforce issues. In addition to his responsibilities in Illinois, Mr. Rubin, served as Acting Deputy Director of Chapter Operations for the NASW from March 2019 to July 2020.

He received his MSW from Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois of Chicago in 1983 and a B.A. in Comparative Politics from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1981. He is a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW), a Licensed Social Worker (LSW) in the state of Illinois and is also a Certified Association Executive (CAE).

Mr. Rubin is a graduate of the Wexner Heritage Fellowship Leadership Program and a current adjunct professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Jane Addams College of Social Work, the Loyola University Chicago School of Social Work and Northeastern Illinois University.

He currently serves on the board of the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership and is a member of the City of Chicago's Council on Mental Health Equity.

Mr. Rubin lives in Skokie, IL with his wife Tamara. They have three children and two grandchildren.

References and Resources

To get an idea of how many steps are involved in getting a bill signed into law in Illinois, check out:
https://www.ilga.gov/commission/lis/98bill_law.pdf

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Posted by Jonathan B. Singer, Ph.D., LCSW at 11:00 PM



Labels: #MacroSW, Interview, NASW, Policy

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Shannon Kish said...



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February 17, 2023 at 11:18AM

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News Releases



NASW Opposes Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Exams

Feb 03, 2023

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) opposes the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) social work licensing exams after a review of ASWB data shows significant disparities in pass rates for prospective social workers of color, older adults, and those who speak English as a second language.

NASW is prepared to oppose the Social Work Interstate Compact Legislation being developed by the Council of State Governments (CSG) if the bill is not substantially improved, including the removal of provisions which codify the ASWB exams. NASW is eager to work with CSG to develop multi-state social work practice legislation.

In an August 2022 statement after the release of the ASWB data, NASW committed to working closely with its partners to propose innovative solutions that reduce harm and increase diversity at all levels of social work practice.

These efforts will initially target removal of non-independent social work practice exams which may be biased, and support efforts to strengthen competency measures.

NASW looks forward to working with its partners to implement these strategic initiatives and to promoting the diversity and well-being of the social work profession, and the health and well-being of the populations social workers serve.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), in Washington, DC, is the largest membership organization of professional social workers. It promotes, develops, and protects the practice of social work and social workers. NASW also seeks to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through its advocacy.

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New Jersey State Board of Social Work Examiners
124 Halsey St.
Newark, New Jersey 07102

October 3, 2022

Dear Social Work Licensing Examiner:

As president and chief executive officer of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), I write to you on behalf of social work education programs across the country. As you are likely aware, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) recently released a report documenting examination pass rates across different levels of the social work profession. Although the data needs further analysis, the descriptive statistics suggest alarming disparities for exam-takers in several categories. The most egregious disparity impacts Black test takers. In addition, Indigenous, and other People of Color also pass at lower rates than White test-takers; those that speak English as a second language pass at lower rates than native English speakers; and older test-takers pass at lower rates than younger ones. Given that the ASWB exam is the only national licensing examination available, these data raise grave concern that the need for a diverse health, behavioral health, and social service workforce (of which social workers are a considerable portion of providers¹) is being significantly impeded.

As the national body for social work education in the United States, Puerto Rico, and Guam, the CSWE urges you to:

- a. Suspend the use of the ASWB exam until a thorough analysis has been completed which will suggest evidenced-based recommendations to correct for inequities.
- b. Consider graduation from a CSWE-Accredited social work education program evidence of beginning competence to practice social work as a professional social worker (granting all graduates licensure or pre-licensure status).
 - a. The only exception to the above involves the license to practice clinical social work. CSWE supports the need for a post-graduate process to license practice at this level, however if the ASWB exam remains central to this process, further analysis of the descriptive data must also occur for this category to identify possible issues.

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ([bls.gov](https://www.bls.gov)) 2020 report indicates there are 715,600 social workers that work in Child, Family, School, Healthcare, Mental Health, and Substance abuse treatment settings.



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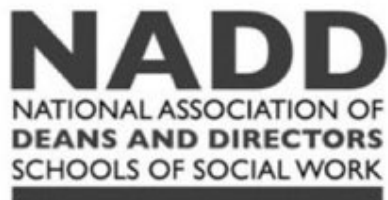
- c. Consider the action taken by the state of Illinois (January 1, 2022) through the Public Act 102-0326, whereby a licensing examination is no longer required for licensure as an Illinois Licensed Social Worker (LSW).
- d. Consider decoupling the Interstate Compact, currently in development, from the ASWB licensure exam.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to engage with you further about the concerns and/or recommendations I offer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Darla Spence Coffey'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Darla Spence Coffey, PhD, MSW
President and Chief Executive Officer
dcoffey@cswe.org



September 2, 2022

NADD STATEMENT ON ASWB RELEASE OF REPORT ON LICENSURE PASSAGE RATES

As you may now know, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), the organization currently responsible for creating, implementing, and monitoring Social Work's National Licensing Examination, recently released a report documenting exam passage rates across the profession. The report helps us to understand the disparities in the diversity of Social Work's workforce nationally. Data clearly evidence extreme racial and age biases in the exam. Moreover, the report reflects an organization that perpetuated use of an exam that has substantively contributed to the documented shortage of diverse licensed social workers.

Suspecting disparities in exam passage rates, Social Work's National Association of Deans and Directors (NADD) had requested these data from ASWB for many years to identify the extent of the issue across the profession. With increasing anecdotal evidence mounting, NADD established a National Licensing Exam Task Force a year ago to elevate the issue and explore alternatives to the existing exam. NADD's primary concern is to ensure an unbiased assessment process such that achieving status as a professional social worker is accessible to all graduates of our accredited programs.

Now, having knowingly held data that clearly reflects extreme test bias, ASWB publicly released not only aggregate data across the profession, but individual State and program level data. The issue is even more egregious than anticipated and reflects a crisis in the profession. NADD calls on social work State licensing boards and legislators to urgently act to immediately address the current exam and assessment process to effect rapid equity in the nation's workforce. Specific immediate and longer-term proposed actions include:

- a. Immediately suspend all fees associated with test taking
- b. Rebate fees paid to persons experiencing multiple test attempts, particularly by groups of people where data demonstrate consistent bias
- c. Suspend Interstate COMPACT discussions based on a uniform 'standardized exam' until biased testing issues are addressed
- d. Consider legislative remedies such as those passed in Illinois and Rhode Island limiting the ASWB test option, recognizing graduation from a CSWE accredited university/college program as an optional pathway toward some levels of licensure
- e. Charge NADD, the academic leaders of the Social Work profession, to collaboratively explore alternatives to the existing exam and monitoring process

NADD is sending separate calls for action to other constituent groups, such as the Council on Social Education and the National Association of Social Workers to work together to identify and address issues that may be contributing to the noted disparities.



We know you share NADD's concern and sense of urgency to effectively respond to these documented disparities. With Social Work workforce shortages across the nation, it is imperative for us all to work together to find responsible resolutions. Should you have any questions that we can help to inform, please contact Dr. Martell Teasley, President of NADD, at martell.teasley@utah.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martell Teasley".

Martell Teasley, PhD, MSW
President, NADD
University of Utah
martell.teasley@utah.edu

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sheryl Kubiak".

Sheryl Kubiak, PhD, MSW
Co-Chair, NADD Task Force
Wayne State University
deanssw@wayne.edu

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tamara S. Davis".

Tamara S. Davis, PhD, MSSW
Co-Chair, NADD Task Force
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ASWB - Oppose SB 871.pdf

Uploaded by: *Cara Sanner

Position: UNF



Association of Social Work Boards

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Written Testimony of Opposition to Senate Bill 871

Maryland Senate Finance Committee

March 9, 2023

Submitted by: Stacey Hardy-Chandler, PhD, JD, LCSW

Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Stacey Hardy-Chandler, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB). ASWB develops and administers the social work licensure examination and also provides support and services to regulatory entities in all 50 states and 4 U.S. territories. ASWB is the only nonprofit organization dedicated to social work regulation. Core to our mission are accountability and public protection through the promotion of safe, competent, and ethical social work practices.

I am submitting testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 871 which makes changes to licensure requirements for social workers. While in concept, we support a workgroup, we have grave concerns about the option to issue a license without an examination as permitted by this emergency bill.

The primary function of licensure regulation is protecting the public. One way we do this is through **verifying minimum competence to practice** as part of our duty of accountability to the public. Professional licensure examinations are the only part of license issuance decisions overseen by regulators themselves in making these crucial decisions. Educational degrees and supervised experience are other aspects of the licensure issuance equation. **Each of these three components offer critical and distinct information that cannot be substituted by the other two; they are complementary, not interchangeable.** Combined, all three components of the licensure accountability equation offer the level of regulatory diligence and oversight that communities served by social workers deserve. The removal of the examination requirement, for any period of time, diminishes our accountability to the public we serve.

As with other healthcare professions, **social work licensure examinations are based on what those who actually work in real-world settings define as entry-to-practice knowledge, skills, and abilities.** These examinations are not academic capstones; they are post-graduate measures that complement the information gleaned from applicants' educational backgrounds to make better decisions in support of strengthening public safety.

This bill would create differences among social workers with the same "licensed" title, creating a bifurcated system. When members of the public work with someone using the title "professional social worker," they deserve to know that there is a standard regulatory consistency in what that credential means.

Professional examinations offer the only **continuously vetted, objective measure** of entry-to-practice competence in licensure issuance decisions. **They involve robust anti-bias measures and embed layers of checks and balances.** As with engineering, medicine, nursing, psychology and other professional disciplines, social work examinations are reliable, valid, and involve a psychometric process that follows industry standards developed jointly with the American Educational

Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education.

As social work regulators, the members of ASWB believe in the importance of practice mobility, affording licensed social workers the ability to practice in any state. With the Council of State Governments' release of the final language for social work licensing compact legislation, we are now one step closer to increased public access to social work services. To do so requires an element of licensure decisions that jurisdictions all have in common. Currently, that unifying element is the licensing examination, and until alternatives are vetted and available, Maryland social workers who do not take the exam and communities who might be served by social workers from other locations (e.g., military) are limited from this opportunity.

As it pertains to the proposed workgroup, ASWB is already exploring alternative competency measurements on behalf of all of our members, including Maryland. **This is part of the support and services ASWB provides to our state-level member boards to lessen the financial and administrative burdens on them.** With guidance and direction, a workgroup could have a valuable impact on the evolution of competency assessment which is why ASWB provides multiple opportunities for stakeholders to convene around regulation nationally. We support having ASWB representation on the proposed Maryland-based workgroup or serving as a regulatory resource for those appointed to serve on it.

In some way, all of us are accountable to the public. A professional license is a government-issued assurance that the licensee has met minimum competency standards to practice ethically and safely. It further assures the consumer of recourse in the event of malpractice. **Professional examinations ensure accountability** in the licensing process.

ASWB welcomes the opportunity to work in collaboration with stakeholders to address and resolve concerns for the best possible outcome – for the profession and for the residents of Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stacy D. Handy Chandler, PhD, JD, LCSW".

Chief Executive Officer
Association of Social Work Boards

ASWB is a nonprofit association whose members comprise the 64 social work licensing authorities from the United States and Canada. ASWB is recognized under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as an entity that provides programs and services to social work regulatory boards in promoting uniformity and lessening burdens on state governments.

Written Testimony for SB871.pdf

Uploaded by: Bynia Reed

Position: UNF

From the Desk of:

Bynia Reed
6425 Ivy Spring Rd., Elkridge, MD 21075
(301) 466-2234
byniar@yahoo.com

March 9, 2023

Dear Members of the Committee,

I have been a volunteer and consultant for ASWB for 15 years. I was an Item Writer for the ASWB Clinical exam, served on the Exam Committee and chaired that Committee (whose task is to review & approve the questions for the exam), and I am now a Consultant who edits items submitted by writers for the Exam. As a Black woman, I can attest to the rigorous process that goes into ensuring items on the exam are free from bias toward or against any group. Our writers and the committee come from a wide array of backgrounds, we screen the items thoroughly, and the items are “pre-tested” on the exam (as non-scored items) and then we review their psychometric data before placing them on a scored exam. This process allows us to delete items showing any type of bias against minority test takers, a particular gender, or against low scorers. We only use items that show good psychometrics according to parameters that allow for fairness.

ASWB voluntarily released the test data in an attempt to be transparent. Yes, the disparities are glaring and problematic. It sheds light on more work that needs to be done and ASWB is committed to doing what it takes to close those gaps. It is important to know that the test data was taken before ASWB moved from a 4-option multiple choice test to a 3-option multiple choice test. I strongly believe that the new format lends itself to items that are cleaner, clearer to read, concise, and help examiners choose the right answer for what’s being tested, regardless of background.

It is also important to note that school data was released. The passing rates of students of several Universities and Schools of Social work in Maryland showed disparities among their graduates of color not being properly prepared to take the exam as compared to their white counterparts. What does this tell us? This means that the disparities existed long before a candidate sat to take the exam. Several systems have failed many minority test-takers probably before they even entered Kindergarten. The ASWB data release shines light on the fact that persons of color have been disenfranchised on many fronts for far too long in this country.

I am privy to several efforts that ASWB is taking to ensure a fair exam. Those include, but are not limited to: switching to a 3-option multiple choice exam, providing free Exam Prep/Practice Exam materials and a host of other resources to test candidates, a plan to discount the fee for re-taking exam (the cost of the exam can be a barrier for many candidates), consideration of alternative options for people who just barely fail (with 1-2 points of passing), creation of a Resource Suite now available to Educators- books, exam prep materials, etc., creation of an Exam Prep app, creation of the Social Work Workforce Coalition- getting input and ideas from leaders in social work organizations, and formation of Community input sessions where social workers are asked to give input and ideas about improving the exam. The fact is, we need time to strengthen the Exam so that we can eliminate disparities and ensure that the exam does what it is supposed to do- provide protection to the public, professionalize the social work profession, and ensure minimum competency for those wishing to call themselves Social Workers.

From the Desk of:

Bynia Reed
6425 Ivy Spring Rd., Elkridge, MD 21075
(301) 466-2234
byniar@yahoo.com

A grave danger and risk will exist if we “open the floodgates” and allow anyone into our profession without demonstrating competence. Not everyone is or can be a social worker. We possess certain knowledge, skills, and abilities that allow us to work with and help vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, persons struggling with addition and/or trauma, and those with mental health issues.

Imagine taking your child to undergo surgery and none of the physicians or surgical staff had to pass an exam in order to operate on your child? Can you imagine the danger and legal ramifications? If these Bills pass, our state regulatory board will see hundreds of thousands of lawsuits against people who are calling themselves social workers, but who are engaging in unsafe and unethical conduct because they were not weeded out of the profession. We must have gatekeeping. Our efforts need to go into giving ASWB the time, resources, and expectations needed to be those gatekeepers. We should not be hasty and make a poor choice for our state based off of a data release that tells many stories. Let's wait for several data releases over the next 3-5 years and go from there. Please reject SB 871 and SB872

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Bynia Reed', written over a horizontal line.

Bynia Reed, LCSW-C

SB0871_UNF_MdCSWC_Social Workers - Lic. Exams - Mo

Uploaded by: Christine Krone

Position: UNF



The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

The MdcSWC, sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,300 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland.

TO: The Honorable Melony Griffith, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Mary Washington

FROM: Judith Gallant, LCSW-C, Chair, Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

DATE: March 10, 2023

RE: **OPPOSE** – Senate Bill 871 – *Social Workers – Licensure Examinations – Moratorium and Workgroup*

The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition (MdcSWC), sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,300 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland. On behalf of MdcSWC, we **oppose** Senate Bill 871.

Senate Bill 871 would establish a workgroup under the Maryland Department of Health charged with identifying alternatives to exam requirements and develop recommendations for an assessment method for independent practice. The bill would also temporarily waive exam requirements for all license categories until June 30, 2024, when the exam moratorium and workgroup expires. Beginning July 1, 2024, the examination requirement would permanently be waived for bachelor social worker applicants.

MdcSWC does not oppose the workgroup established under Senate Bill 871 and would be more than happy to serve on the workgroup. MdcSWC strongly opposes the moratorium provisions of the bill. We recognize the inequities in pass rates and understand something needs to be done. However, this is part of a larger national discussion – it is not specific to Maryland. The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), the organization responsible for creating and administering the exam nationwide, took the step of publishing the national, state, and school exam pass rate data to contribute to and lead engagement in profession-wide conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion. They are taking a multifaceted approach to addressing these disparities, including collaborating with the social work community to bring more perspectives, including those of individuals representing diverse racial, social, economic, geographic, and ethnic backgrounds, into the exam development process. And beginning in February of this year, ASWB has piloted a free support program for test-takers.

Compounding our opposition to the exam moratorium is Maryland's participation in an expected interstate licensure compact. The Council of State Governments, partnered with the Department of Defense and ASWB have developed a new interstate compact (anticipate 2024 legislation). This additional licensing pathway will facilitate multistate practice. We understand there are workforce issues in the field, and the compact is one approach aimed at reducing barriers to license portability. MdcSWC wants to have an equitable exam, but we also don't want to jeopardize Maryland's participation in the interstate compact. Changing the requirements for licensure in Maryland will do just that. For these reasons, we respectfully oppose Senate Bill 871.

For more information call:

Christine K. Krone
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
Danna L. Kauffman
410-244-7000

Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work: www.gwscsw.org

Contacts: Coalition Chair: Judy Gallant, LCSW-C; email: jg708@columbia.edu; mobile (301) 717-1004
Legislative Consultants: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer and Christine Krone, Schwartz, Metz, Wise & Kauffman, PA,
20 West Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

Email: pmetz@smwpa.com; mobile (410) 746-9003 ; ckrone@smwpa.com; mobile (410) 940-9165

SB0871 - oral testimony, 3:10:2023.pdf

Uploaded by: Judith Gallant

Position: UNF



The Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

The MdCSWC, sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, represents the interests of more than 9,300 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland.

TO: The Honorable Melony Griffith, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Chris West

FROM: Judith Gallant, LCSW-C, Chair, Maryland Clinical Social Work Coalition

DATE: March 10, 2023

RE: **OPPOSE** – Senate Bill 871 – Social Workers - Licensure Examinations -
Moratorium and Workgroup

I am Judith Gallant, Chair of the MD Clinical Social Work Coalition (MdCSWC), sponsored by the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work. We represent the interests of more than 9,300 licensed clinical social workers in Maryland. On behalf of MdCSWC, we **oppose** Senate Bill 871.

Senate Bill 871 would remove the licensure examination requirement for all Social Workers in MD, including LCSW-Cs. The bill would also require the MD Department of Health to establish a workgroup to study alternatives to the exam requirements.

Currently, the LCSW-C is considered a health care provider in MD. We diagnose and provide psychotherapy to individuals suffering from mental health disorders or substance use conditions. However, since the licensure for all other health care providers depends on passing an exam, the bill's proposed elimination of licensing exams could jeopardize insurance reimbursement and provision of clinical services. Such jeopardy could come at a time when there is a mental health crisis in our country and our state, and mental health providers are in short supply. With Clinical Social Workers being the largest provider of mental health treatment in our country, can Maryland afford to lose the treatment Clinical Social workers provide? The testing requirement currently serves as an essential component of public protection.

Additionally, doing away with current testing will put at risk Maryland's participation in the Interstate Social Work Compact, recently released by the Council of State Governments. The Compact will broaden the availability of social workers to practice in our State, and it will broaden opportunities for Maryland licensed social workers to practice in other states. The Compact requires that a state's Clinical Social Work licensure entails passing a nationally recognized exam in order for the state to become part of the Compact.

The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) is responsible for the national exams. ASWB is partnering with a number of Social Work organizations (including the Clinical Social Work Association) to examine and eliminate any racial bias issues there may be within the exams. This review will take some time. Passage of SB 871 would likely result in unintended consequences that could be extremely damaging to our clients and our profession. For these reasons, we respectfully **oppose** Senate Bill 871.

Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work: www.gwscsw.org

Contacts: Coalition Chair: Judy Gallant, LCSW-C; email: judy.gallant@verizon.net; mobile (301) 717-1004
Legislative Consultants: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer and Christine Krone, Schwartz, Metz, Wise & Kauffman, PA,
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For more information call:

Christine K. Krone
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
Danna L. Kauffman
410-244-7000

Testimony (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Kimberly Stroud

Position: UNF

Testimony

Re: SB0871

Date: 3/9/2023

The purpose of this letter is to submit written testimony opposing Bill SB0871. I am a licensed social worker in the state of Maryland that passed a licensing examination in 1999. I prepared for and passed the licensing examination after working very hard to show proof of knowledge gained during my Masters Level education. I am absolutely opposed to anyone having the ability to practice as a social worker without being properly licensed. Secondly, I am opposed to anyone having the ability to practice as a social worker without passing a licensing examination that gives them the opportunity to demonstrate proof of the knowledge that was obtained as a student in an accredited institution.

It would be without legitimacy and very dangerous to allow any persons to practice as a social worker. without given the chance to prove the knowledge that they have obtained. This can only be done by passing a licensing examination.

As an African American woman who has personally witnessed the “watered down” effect of the social worker profession, I am a strong advocate to upholding the high standard that was in place when I began practice in 1999. I have seen persons enter the social work profession, specifically in the clinical setting without being prepared to do so. I have also witnessed others outside of the social work profession exercising their right to “practice” or give social work advice regarding a patient without having the proper knowledge to do so.

To pass this bill would further lessen the high standard of professionalism that we, as licensed social workers have tried so hard to uphold. It would also put those in the community who need our services at risk in the event that they so happen to be treated by one who has not shown the ability to practice as a social worker by passing a licensing examination.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to weigh in on this bill. I will continue to advocate for proof of 100% accountability for those who desire to practice as a social work professional.

Kimberly Stroud, LMSW

3 - SB 871 - FIN - B&C - Oppose.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: State of Maryland (MD)

Position: UNF



Board of Social Work Examiners

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

*Sondra G. Petty, Chair – Daphne McClellan, Executive Director
4201 Patterson Avenue, Suite 318 Baltimore MD 21215 Phone: 410-764-4788*

2023 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL NO: SB 871
COMMITTEE: Finance
POSITION: Oppose

TITLE: State Board of Social Work Examiners – Licensure Examinations – Moratorium and Workgroup

BILL ANALYSIS: This bill, would alter the licensure examination requirements for social workers and would require the Maryland Department of Health to establish a workgroup to identify alternatives to examination requirements for a master social worker (LMSW) license, a certified social worker (LCSW) license or a certified social worker-clinical (LCSW-C) license and develop recommendations for a certain assessment method to replace certain examination requirements.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: The Board of Social Work Examiners (the “Board”) opposes SB 871.

The primary responsibility of the Board is to protect the public from the unlicensed and potentially incompetent or unethical practice of social work. The requirements to be licensed as a Master Social Worker (LMSW) are an MSW from an accredited school, a criminal background check, and a basic, entry level exam. This bill would permit a person with an MSW to be licensed as an LMSW for two years by simply demonstrating that they have a degree and have passed a criminal background check. With that license the licensee could engage in all manner of social work practice; including clinical practice such as formulating a diagnosis, treatment of biopsychosocial conditions, treatment of behavioral health disorders and the provision of psychotherapy; as long as that individual is being supervised by a person with an LCSW-C license.

Depending on the course choices a social work student makes, they can be prepared with a number of clinical courses or with very few. Some social workers graduate with only 6 credit hours that might be considered clinical in nature. For the protection of the public, we depend on a combination of education, testing and supervision. None of these alone are sufficient. We believe that an exam is an important part of the process of awarding this entry level practice credential (LMSW).

A moratorium on the examination for the LCSW is counter intuitive. The only difference between a person with an LMSW and an LCSW is supervised experience and passage of a specific exam. We already have in statute a status of LMSW Independent Practitioner which is an LMSW who has met certain criteria for hours of experience and supervision. If a person does not wish to take the LCSW exam, they can apply for the independent practice status which grants

the exact same privileges as the LCSW. For this reason, we will no longer offer the LCSW nor approve people to take the Advanced Generalist exam after December 31, 2023.

In order to obtain the clinical social work license (LCSW-C) an applicant must already have an LMSW, as well as meet requirements for clinical coursework, experience and supervision; which all lead up to the requirement to take a clinical examination. The LCSW-C allows the licensee to practice independently; to evaluate, diagnose, and treat biopsychosocial conditions, mental and emotional conditions and impairments, and behavioral health disorders, including substance use disorders, addictive disorders, and mental disorders; as well as petition for emergency evaluation, provide psychotherapy and supervise other social workers in their clinical practice.

Determining an applicant's readiness and competency to engage in this high-level practice is the reason that the Board exists. The Board feels strongly that passage of a clinical exam is essential. There is no other state in this country which allows social workers to obtain a clinical license without taking and passing the ASWB clinical exam. Until another exam is available or there is another way to demonstrably determine competency, we would be shirking our responsibility to the public to grant applicants the LCSW-C license called for in this legislation. LMSWs may engage in clinical practice under the supervision of an LCSW-C. Aside from owning their own private practice or practicing without supervision, a person with an LMSW is not being held back from using their degree or earning a living. There should be no moratorium on the exam for the LCSW-C license.

The fact that this is an emergency bill is quite concerning. If this legislation were to pass, the Board would need time to consider how to distinguish between those who have met proper requirements for independent licensure and those who have not. We would need to look at what third party payers require for clinicians to be properly credentialed. Regulations for the practice of social work by people who are licensed during this moratorium would need to be written and put in place. Workforce issues and understaffing have been addressed in a number of bills and hearings already this year. Many complications would ensue due to this legislation. There would be no time to properly address and implement these changes if the elements of this bill immediately become law.

Finally, this bill requires the MDH to establish a workgroup to consider alternatives to examination requirements and to develop recommendations for an assessment method for independent practice. We support the idea of a workgroup. However, we are concerned that there is no clear outline as to how this responsibility would be carried out and no resources for the extensive research which would be required to meet the objectives. We feel strongly that the workgroup members suggested in this legislation are not those who would have the expertise to tackle this important task. Recent social work graduates and consumers are not the people who would have the most insight into how to determine competency for independent social work practice.

If this legislation does not pass, our board is committed to establishing a task force to address the issue of the disparity in pass rates on the ASWB exam. We will be including in this task force representatives of all of the academic SW programs in MD, three of which are HBCUs. We will also include representatives of governmental and nongovernmental social service agencies and

professional social work associations. Stakeholders, including those who have been negatively impacted by the examination requirement and those who feel the requirement is necessary to their practice, will be included. Every effort will be made to make sure that this is a diverse and goal-oriented group. The Board hopes that this commitment will meet the concerns of your committee.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony. For all of the reasons stated, the Board of Social Work Examiners respectfully requests an unfavorable report on SB 871.

If you require additional information, please contact Dr. Daphne McClellan, Executive Director at (410) 764-4722 or at Daphne.McClellan@maryland.gov.

The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.

testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Susanna Sung

Position: UNF

Madame Chairwoman and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Susanna Sung. I have been a licensed social worker in Maryland for 26 years and have volunteered with ASWB for 22 years.

I am testifying against SB 871 because I believe that placing a moratorium on the social work licensing exams will pose a risk to the public and that lowering standards is especially problematic in a field that serves the most vulnerable populations. I have worked with children and adults with trauma, substance use disorders, and those with serious mental illnesses. I know how predators and others can exploit the vulnerable, and it is critical to hold uniform standards to protect the public.

Today I bring my experience working in both examination development and the development of the Social Work Compact for multi-state practice. Social workers deserve to have practice mobility and the public needs services from competent social workers. The public deserves increased access to competent care that the Social Work Compact can provide.

At a time when practice mobility across jurisdictional lines—including rapidly evolving service modalities like telehealth—an additional benefit of an objective, uniform exam is portability.

For the military and others, for example, the exam offers opportunities beyond a single state's boundaries, which is especially important in our DMV area. Because a passing score in Maryland meets the same standard as a passing score in Washington state, jurisdictions using the exam are also supporting administrative endorsement efficiencies, better agility for social work service providers, and broader access for client populations.

My experience with exam development has shown me the steps ASWB takes to ensure fairness in its exams, including the rigorous

psychometric analysis of every single exam question to identify potential bias. In my volunteer work with ASWB on the exams, I have had the privilege to work with a diverse group of professionals who have worked in diverse fields of social work, and have many different professional journeys. I have seen the steps ASWB takes to ensure a reliable and valid exam that reflects what is critical to practice.

I also know that ASWB is exploring options for additional ways of assessing competence to ensure that entry to practice is open to everyone who meets licensure requirements; requirements that rightly include an objective and uniform demonstration of the ability to practice safely, competently, and ethically.

I urge you to consider the consequences on Maryland's ability to participate in the Social Work Compact and vote no on SB 871.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Susanna Sung, LCSW-C

SB871 Written testimony (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Terri Collins-Green

Position: UNF

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

BILL: SB871 places an immediate moratorium on using an exam as a requirement for social work licensure. All other requirements for licensure would remain in place. This bill also mandates a workgroup to develop recommendations for a fairer path to licensure

FROM: Terri Collins-Green, LCSW-C

POSITION: Oppose

DATE: 3/10/2023

I am an LCSW-C whose been licensed in Maryland since 2007 (#13410). I am proud to be a social worker and serve the citizens of Maryland. I've been a Board Certified Clinical Supervisor since 2013. I've worked in a private practice. I have been an adjunct faculty teaching MSW students since 2016. I have been a defense-based forensic social worker since 2011.

I am an African American woman at the end of the baby boomer era, raised in Carroll County, with a mother who graduated from the last segregated high school in 1962, who is the first generation in my family to graduate from college. I had a family member who completed suicide in 1976 that devastated my family for years.

I know the pain of racism. Hearing the echoes of the "n" word hurled at me in public school, and on warm summer nights in my segregated, black community when the neighboring town was a known KKK hub.

Racial disparities in Exams Is Not New or Specific to Social Work

I use this operational definition of racism as coined by Ken Wystma in his book, *The Myth of Equality: Uncovering the Roots of Injustice and Privilege* (2017), racism is the diminishment of the worth of men and women in and through bias, systems, and power structures that disadvantage them intangible ways based on skin color...Racism in the United States is worse than we thought, its lasting consequences are more significant than we think, and our responsibility is greater than we've been taught. (Wystma,p. 6)

I acknowledge and validate the high cost of racism to this group of 1227 individuals who at no fault of their own, and at great financial cost have been negatively affected by the racial disparities in the social work exam. AND, at the same time, I assert that it is inconceivable that no other professional exams are not biased and discriminatory. Who's minding the entire store?

According to the website, International Affairs Office, U.S. Department of Education there are 33 professions in the US which have either a licensure or certification process in place.

The term “licensure” generally refers to an official process, administered by a state-level authority, that is required by law in order for an individual to practice a regulated profession. The term “certification” generally refers to a function administered by a nongovernmental organization, which is intended to further recognize professional competence based on having met the quality standards of the organization. The prevalence and relevance of certification varies by profession.

In fact, Bloomberg Law published this article in July 2021, researched by Deborah Jones Merritt, Carol Chomsky, Claudia Angelos, and Joan Howarth, all four authors are members of the [Collaboratory on Legal Education and Licensing for Practice](#), a group of 11 scholars who have studied and written about the bar exam, licensing, and legal education for many years found racial disparities in the Bar exam:

Stark racial disparities mark the legal profession’s licensing process. [Last year](#), just 66% of Black law school graduates passed the bar exam on their first try. Among White candidates, 88% succeeded. Other racial groups fell in between, ranging from a 76% first-time pass rate for Latinx candidates to an 80% rate for Asian exam takers. But the exam’s disparate impact reaches even further than that. The AccessLex report reveals that even after controlling for all of these factors (household size, household income, employment, use of a commercial prep course, LSAT score, law school selectivity), candidates of color were significantly more likely to fail the bar exam than White candidates.

They concluded about the bar exam:

Our profession, in sum, maintains an entrance exam that predictably and inexorably favors White candidates. The exam requires intensive and expensive preparation that White candidates can more likely afford. It then employs a testing format and environment known to produce stereotype threat in candidates of color.

Social worker shortage

There have been arguments asserted that these racial disparities have contributed to a shortage of social workers which is not true. And that there must be some hasty solution to provide a substantial number of social workers to fill positions to provide services to foster youth. According to this study by Lin, et al, US Social Worker Workforce Report Card: Forecasting Nationwide Shortages (2016) found:

According to the projections, the number of states with shortage ratios more severe than the current national ratio will increase from 11 states in 2012 to 30 states by 2030 and the nation will experience a total shortfall of over 195,000

social workers, with the most severe shortages occurring in the western and southern regions of the United States.

The shortage of social workers is due to the rapid growth of the industry and need for social work services. Per the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, overall employment of social workers is projected to grow 9 percent from 2021 to 2031, faster than the average for all occupations. About 74,700 openings for social workers are projected each year, on average, over the decade. Many of those openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force, such as to retire.

Non-profit Organizations and Social Work Practice

I respect the role of MARFY in the Maryland community, however of the 15 Board Members and 35 Staff Members listed on their website, only one person is a licensed social worker. I would assert that social workers should not be regarded as “case managers only” or as “babysitters” for foster care youth. I am gravely concerned that loosening the requirements for the social work profession by opting out and or eliminating the exam will encourage agencies to use social workers primarily as case managers.

Social work is defined in Maryland Health Occupations Article, 19-101(p-1), Annotated Code of Maryland:

“Practice social work” means to apply the theories, knowledge, procedures, methods ... to restore or enhance social and or psychosocial functioning of individuals, couples, families, groups, organizations, or communities through:

Assessment which is defined under COMAR 10.42.02.02 means obtaining and analyzing information about a client and the client’s circumstance while using appropriate social work knowledge, skills, values, and theory to develop a service, intervention, or treatment plan.

Clinical social workers

According to the American Board of Clinical Social Work, clinical social work is a healthcare profession based on theories and methods of prevention and treatment in providing mental-health/healthcare services, with special focus on behavioral and bio-psychosocial problems and disorders. Clinical social work’s unique attributes include use of the person-in-environment perspective, respect for the primacy of client rights and strong therapeutic alliance between client and practitioner. With 250,000 practitioners serving millions of client consumers, clinical social workers constitute the largest group of mental-health/healthcare providers in the nation.

Consideration of Long term Negative consequences

There are approximately 18,000 licensed social workers in Maryland, between 11,000-12,000 are LCSW-Cs, approximately 6,000 LMSWs, 300 LCSWs, 420 LBSWs. The SWEAR report quotes 1,227 impacted MSWs and states:

“Even without exams, there are substantial requirements for licensure, including graduation from a nationally accredited school—which includes hundreds of supervised hours of fieldwork, thousands of hours of supervised practice, and a background check. This is a sufficient baseline to ensure that social workers are prepared to practice safely and equitably.”

Are we considering sacrificing the professionalism of social work practice in Maryland, and risk limiting future job opportunities for social workers. I ask, whether the following items have been considered as long-term, collateral consequences AND can I be assured that these three areas of concern have been researched and addressed to the fullest extent and that there will be no impact on social workers?

Private, state and federal insurance administrators are the gatekeepers for allowing third-party billing. There is no way of forecasting how these industries will respond to social workers without any licensure exam process or opting out. They may choose to turn to other mental health providers (LCPC, Psychologists) for third-party billing, thus closing the door on opportunities for social workers who want to pursue a private practice. Has this potential change been considered?

I raise the question regarding malpractice insurance coverage. Will those who opt out or have no access to a licensure exam be able to obtain malpractice insurance. I have not been able to ascertain an affirmative answer to this question, has this been considered and properly addressed to ensure coverage?

Finally, as a defense-based forensic social worker for more than a decade, I provide expert witness testimony in clinical social work. I am concerned about the potential negative impact of clinical social workers being able to pass/withstand the Daubert standard when there is either no licensure exam and or one can opt out. On August 28, 2020, the Maryland Court of Appeals held that Maryland will now “implement a single standard by which courts evaluate all expert testimony: *Daubert*.” This is a higher standard of expertise allowed by the judge, that requires the analysis for admitting expert testimony under *Daubert* requiring a trial court to focus on the methodology employed by the expert and whether the conclusion is too distinct from that methodology. Judges and state’s attorney’s may dispute the legitimacy of the social work profession in comparison to other mental health professions who will continue to use a licensure exam as confirmation of competence. Has this been considered?

Objectionable Workgroup

I have heard rumors regarding the makeup of the “workgroup”, that is proposed to be impacted MSWs and impacted consumers who have not had access to a social worker. If this is the proposed work group, I am shocked. Who decided this should be the workgroup and how equitable is this when the voice of 18,000 licensed social workers have had no input as to how/who represents the profession in the formulation of a new, clinical assessment approach to our profession. This is unacceptable and more so it is not true to the ideals of democracy. This plan to find alternative solutions serves only to exclude the current licensed social workers of Maryland, many of whom would be tasked with providing clinical supervision to this group. At best this is a double standard, and will cause divisiveness within the field. Should a resident doctor propose to measure competency for a surgeon or a law student propose competency for a trial attorney?

Do No Harm

In conclusion, social workers serve the most vulnerable populations. As an LCSW-C, I've sat with a client experiencing suicidal ideation and had to assess their acuity.. I've testified as an expert in clinical social work on adolescent brain development on behalf of a teenager who is facing a long prison sentence. Peoples' lives are at stake, are we willing to sacrifice the lives of Maryland citizens who are suffering from psychological distress and mental illness by taking such hasty actions without considering long-term consequences.

Everyone deserves equity and justice, those maligned MSWs AND the social work profession in general. ASWB must be held accountable, must be forced to clean the slate, and start afresh. Their process for the formulation of the examination and questions has proven to be biased, faulty, and discriminatory. I inform this body that the entire history of the social work profession has proven to be “racist” as affirmed in the June 2021 report, Undoing Racism: NASW Report to the Profession on Racial Justice Priorities and Action, issued by NASW-National affirmed:

Social work is unique in its dual focus of enhancing human well-being and championing social justice. Yet our occupation's history is also linked to many shameful chapters in America's story. Despite visible leadership in our nation's most important social justice movements and in creating our country's social safety net, **the social work profession has also contributed to ongoing discrimination and oppression of people of color through its systems, policies, and practices.**

NASW-National in this report stated: “THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE AND **WE NEED TO MAKE AMENDS.**” They went on in the report to lay out a two-year plan: Year One-Responding to the Crisis and Year Two-Planning Next Steps, for making amends. I find it hypocritical that two years later that NASW-National stated:

On February 3, 2023, the National Association of Social Workers announced that they oppose the use of the ASWB exams, based on the clear and incontrovertible evidence that they discriminate against marginalized groups.

I ask where is the same grace for ASWB in making amends by having at a minimum of the same two years to make needed changes.

I ask that we, “not throw the baby out with the dirty water.”

References

Wystma, K. (2017). *The Myth of Equality: Uncovering the Roots of Injustice and Privilege*. IVP Books.

International Affairs Office, U.S. Department of Education.

<https://sites.ed.gov/international/professional-licensure/#:~:text=Licensure%20vs.-,Certification,t%20practice%20a%20regulated%20profession>

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Vernon W. Lin, Joyce Lin, Xiaoming Zhang, U.S. Social Worker Workforce Report Card: Forecasting Nationwide Shortages, *Social Work*, Volume 61, Issue 1, January 2016, Pages 7–15, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swv047>

National Law Review, March 7, 2023, Volume XIII, Number 66

[Maryland Adopts Daubert Standard for Expert Testimony: Fallout from Jurisprudential Drift](#)

NASW, June 2021

[UNDOING RACISM THROUGH SOCIAL WORK](#)

Submitted by

Terri Collins-Green, LCSW-C (license #13410)

terricollins1020@gmail.com

443-280-2227

SB871 and SB872 SSW Bills SSW Postmus FIN-LOI 3-10

Uploaded by: Judy Postmus

Position: INFO

March 10, 2023

LETTER OF INFORMATION**SB 871 Social Workers - Licensure Examinations - Moratorium and Workgroup**
SB 872 State Board of Social Work Examiners - Temporary License to Practice Social Work

Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee:

This past summer, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), the organization currently responsible for creating, implementing, and monitoring Social Work's National Licensing Examination, released a report documenting exam passage rates for each state. Data clearly shows evidence of extreme racial and age biases in the exam in Maryland and across the country. These biases contribute to a documented shortage of diverse licensed social workers.

As a concerned dean of the state's largest School of Social Work (SSW), we need to immediately address this discriminatory exam and assessment process to effect rapid equity in the nation's social work and behavioral health workforce. Specific immediate and longer-term proposed actions include:

1. Form an expert commission to examine the causes of disparities in pass rates, and temporarily suspend the test requirement for Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) until the commission presents their findings. This commission should include representatives from Maryland Schools of Social Work and other social work organizations. The work should be done within two years. During that time, all graduates from Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)-accredited schools can apply, for free, for a temporary license.
2. Make all ASWB LMSW examination prep materials free.
3. Charge a single fee for exam (no fee to retest).
4. Shrink the 90-day limit between test attempts.
5. Provide more specific feedback on incorrect answers and allow test takers to only retake the section of the exam that they did not pass.
6. De-couple the master's level ASWB exam from the interstate compact. The criteria will be based on your home state's requirements for licensure.
7. Examine other states who do not rely on exams at the entry level licensing to determine how successful those states are in supporting and monitoring the social work profession.

With Social Work workforce shortages across the nation, it is imperative for us all to work together to find responsible resolutions. Should you have any questions that we can help to inform, please contact Dr. Judy L. Postmus at dean@ssw.umaryland.edu.

Sincerely,

Judy L. Postmus, Ph.D., ACSW
Dean & Professor

Cc: Senator Mary Washington