



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:

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