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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](mailto:MSLICHER@PROJECTPLASE.ORG), 410. 837. 1400, EXT. 111 OR 443.980-0626

Sincerely,



Mary C. Slicher

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People Lacking Ample Shelter & Employment

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