

March 9, 2023

Senate Bill 872

State Board of Social Work Examiners – Temporary License to Practice Social Work

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.

We urge you to vote in favor of this bill to alleviate the overwhelming strain on the field of social work and lack of licensed professionals available to meet the needs of our youth and families throughout Maryland. As a result of a backlog in test exam appointments, the disparate social work board exam resulting in people of color failing at an alarming rate and the increase in acuity in mental health needs, we need social workers now more than ever. Due to the shortage, youth are not able to be placed in therapeutic environments and are languishing in hospitals, living in hotels, on the street or sleeping in DSS offices. This bill would allow social workers who have graduated from a school of social work, passed all of their background checks and completed their 2 year internship, thus having experience in the field, to provide services under the supervision of a Licensed Clinical Social Worker Supervisor. They would have strenuous oversight and is very similar to how they operated and the services they delivered during their internship.

Maryland is in a dire state as it relates to social work and ensuring that our young people and communities needs are being adequately met. We ask for a



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favorable vote for Senate Bill 872. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Respectfully,

*Chloe Bernardi, LCSW-C*