

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,

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