

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*

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