

March 9, 2023

Senate Bill 0817

State Board of Social Work Examiners – License Examinations-Moratorium  
and Workgroup

House Health and Government Operations

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.

Recently, the Association of Social Work Board published an alarming data analysis report highlighting the enormous disparities in the social work exam resulting in people of color failing at a significant rate compared to others. The information is staggering and sets people up for failure and prevents them from becoming licensed social workers even after completing all the required schooling. There is also an economic component in that each time a person fails, they must pay again to retake the test. This can not continue.

Approving SB 0871 will allow a skilled set of professionals to carefully assess the test, develop a comprehensive plan to redevelop it, and recreate a test that is fair, representative and allows an equitable chance for all people to take it and pass. We are already experiencing an epic national shortage of social workers, leaving kids and families mental health needs unmet, and this disparate exam contributes to the problem.



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We urge you to vote FAVORABLE for House Bill 0871 so that we can even the playing field and allow for fully qualified individuals to enter the field of social work. Thank you for your time and consideration to this critical matter.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Chloe Bernardi*

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President/CEO

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