

Good afternoon committee members,

I am writing to share my views on the proposed legislation to waive the need for examination requirements for social workers. I understand that this bill was introduced to meet the needs of addressing the lack of social workers in the state as well as the concern that the driver for lack of social workers is due to the inability for Black and Brown social workers to pass the licensing board.

Although I agree that the lack of BIPOC social workers passing the licensing exam is indeed a result of systematic and structural racism in standardized testing and needs to be addressed at a policy level, waiving examination requirements either temporarily or permanently is not the answer to the problem we are trying to solve.

I can not over communicate the level of risk to our community and our social workers having unlicensed people in the field will produce. As social workers, we work with marginalized populations that are at high risk for abuse. Having individuals who have not met the minimum standards for skills and competency will only exacerbate the potential for abuse. I am a believer that social workers will have their client's best interests at heart but may have the potential to cause harm or not have the competency to report high risk situations. Further, as social workers our charge is to protect our clients. Licensure IS how we protect our clients. Removing that requirement reduces any protection we have for our clients.

Lastly, if we make changes to our licensing requirements we run the risk of de-professionalizing the profession in a way that damages all of the respect and strides we have made over the last 25 years. Ask yourself, would you work with an attorney who did not pass the bar, or a physician that did not pass her boards? The answer is no, the same answer will hold true for social workers. Agencies will not be able to bill for services, social workers will lose pay and that will cause even more of a social work shortage.

Please vote no on waiving the licensing requirements for bachelors and graduate level social workers.

Respectfully Submitted,

Khristine Heflin, LCSW-C