

March 9, 2023

The Honorable Chairwoman Melony Griffith
The Senate Finance Committee

RE: SB871 – Social Workers – Licensure Examinations – Moratorium and Workgroup AND
SB872 – State Board of Social Work Examiners – Temporary License to Practice Social Work
Position: SUPPORT

Dear Madam Chair Griffith, Madam Vice-Chair Klausmeier, and esteemed Members of the Senate Finance Committee, I am writing to express support for SB871 and SB872.

Pressley Ridge serves some of the state’s most vulnerable youth and young adults. Each year nearly 8,000 children and families are strengthened primarily through services provided in their homes and community and, if needed, in an out-of-home setting. Pressley Ridge provides individuals and families with hope and support through life’s challenges. We pride ourselves on partnering with families and meeting them where they are, when they need it most.

Since 1988, Pressley Ridge has been a leader in foster care and community-based mental health services in Maryland. In recent years, we have also added supportive services for transition-age youth, including workforce development and independent living programs.

Our mission to do whatever it takes to create success for children and families requires that we be in a state of constant readiness, with the workforce to do so. We employ licensed social workers to provide critical case management, behavioral health, and therapeutic services to meet the needs of children, youth, and families. The current delays at the Board of Social Work Examiners to process applications for licensure severely limits our ability and capacity to meet those needs. Private providers like Pressley Ridge are bound by a set of regulations that limits the number of children and youth a social worker can serve in our Treatment Foster Care and Independent Living programs, thereby hampering our efforts to support the state in placing youth in these programs. In the last year we have capped admissions to our programs due to the shortage of licensed social workers. Other like providers across the state have had to do the same, resulting in fewer home settings for youth.

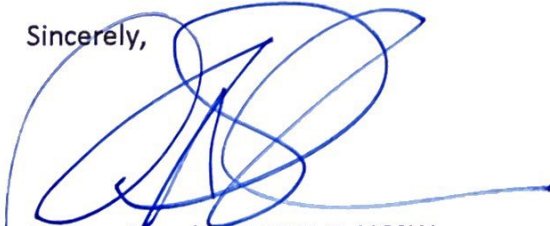
SB872 will allow providers the opportunity to hire an applicant who has completed his or her required academic work, field education experience, passed the requisite background clearance and are simply waiting to take the licensing exam. Once hired, the employee will work under the supervision of a Licensed Certified Social Worker – Clinical (LCSW-C). This bill can be a tool for the Board of Social Work Examiners to eliminate delays and bottlenecks in the licensing process.

Last year, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) published data that highlighted disparities in the exam pass rates for different demographic groups. SB 871 seeks to responsibly study the contexts in which these disparities exist. In an effort to measure competency, social structural tools, like the social work exam, negates the lived experiences of its test takers and fail to recognize realities of marginalized communities.

A workgroup can provide critical analysis and transformation of the exam structure, ensuring that the perpetuation of power structures that advance and protect privilege, cease to exist, or at least are diminished. SB871 can transform patterns of social privilege and honor the profession's commitment to social change and social justice.

We at Pressley Ridge encourage a favorable report on SB871 and SB872. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Simone Bramble, LCSW-C, LICSW
Executive Director