

Burke Testimony

For Hearing, March 10, 2023

My name is Christina Burke. I am a Deaf licensed graduate social worker in DC and master social worker in MD. I am in favor of passing both SB871 and SB872. I am writing to share my story with you as a Deaf social worker who faces challenges current license regulations due to being restricted and inflexible. They are making the social work licensing process difficult to become a fully licensed clinical social worker.

I obtained my MSW degree from Gallaudet University in 2015 and moved to Oregon where I was hired as a school counselor at the school for the deaf in Salem in September 2016. Since there was no licensed clinical social worker to supervise me at my job, I sought supervision in the community. As a Deaf person whose primary language is ASL, I wanted to find an ASL proficient deaf or hearing supervisor so that we could communicate directly. If I were to work with a licensed clinical social worker who did not know ASL, there would be two challenges. One, I would have to pay for both the supervision and the interpreter. Two, my supervisor would have no cultural competence with the population that I was working with.

After determining that there was no licensed clinical social worker available to supervise me in ASL, my work recommended that I contact a Deaf psychologist, Dr. Jaime Wilson. Dr. Wilson is a nationally respected Deaf clinician and his background can be found at this link: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jabwilson/>. The Oregon Board of Social Workers required Dr. Wilson to complete six CEUs of specific content needed by board approved clinical supervisors. He did complete them and then we were approved by the board to begin our clinical supervision. I earned 1,131 hours under his tutelage. I was extremely grateful to the Oregon Board for its equitable decision on my behalf. Their actions cemented my faith in my chosen profession of Social Work.

I ended my employment in Oregon for family reasons and to support the significantly larger Deaf and hard of hearing community in Washington D.C. Before moving to Washington D.C. in October 2017, I called the District of Columbia Board of Social Work by using a video relay interpreting service to inquire if I could transfer my hours there from Oregon; they did not respond directly to my question about counting the Oregon hours. They only said that I can apply for LCSW when I meet their 3,000 hours requirement. I took their LGSW examination in June 2018. I failed it the first time by a few points. I retook the exam and passed it in September 2018. I began working as a mental health counselor for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. in November 2018 under LICSW supervisors who were Deaf and/or proficient in ASL until leaving that position in August 2019. CAPS' website can be found at this link: <https://gallaudet.edu/counseling-psychological-services/>.

I then found a Deaf supervisor who had both LICSW and LCSW-C licenses. That supervisor recommended that I obtain an LMSW through endorsement. I applied and got approved by the

Board of Social Work in Maryland. Then I became an independent contractor as a mental health teletherapist for National Deaf Therapy (NDT) and began seeing clients under an LICSW and LCSW-C supervisor in May 2020. To learn more about NDT, their link could be found at: <https://nationaldeaftherapy.com/>.

With Oregon, CAPS, and NDT, I had completed 3,000 hours of clinical hours and 100 hours of face-to-face supervision by May 2022. I submitted my application for the LICSW on May 26th, 2022. They denied my application on July 6th, 2022, because I did not have supervised hours by an LICSW supervisor in the state of Oregon. On July 11th, 2022, I appealed to the District of Columbia Board of Social Work's decision against my request for LCSW.

The District of Columbia Board of Social Work denied my appeal on July 25th, 2022, and requested me to complete 9 hours of immediate face to face supervision and 1118 general supervision or work hours under an LICSW.

On August 10th, 2022, I contacted Ms. Njeri Clay, the BSWE Staff Social Worker by email, explained my situation with the District of Columbia Board of Social Work, and asked her if Maryland would consider my situation and accept the hours from Oregon towards my application for LCSW-C. Ms. Clay replied back, stating that the Maryland BSWE does not accept supervision outside of their profession and that she did not see an allowed exception indicated in their regulations. Her response deterred me from applying for the LCSW-C. I have continued to practice under supervision and currently, I am at 2,265 hours of supervised social work experience and 126 hours of periodic direct face-to-face supervision (not counting the Oregon hours)

While I understand the regulations, I felt that my circumstances warrant further consideration, and in September 2022, I contacted the National Association for the Deaf, "the nation's premier civil rights organization of, by, and for deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the United States of America" to discuss my situation (<https://www.nad.org/about-us/>). Due to competing demands on their resources, a meeting has not yet been scheduled.

Thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony. I hope my situation will give you a better idea of how inequities in the licensing process for BIPOC candidates and candidates in other populations is an issue that needs to be resolved.

Respectfully,

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