

**Senate Bill 0871**

**Social Workers-Licensure Examinations-Moratorium and Workgroup**

Finance Committee

March 10, 2023

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT**

I represent Arrow Child & Family Ministries, a multi-service non-profit that serves over 500 vulnerable youth and families in Maryland each year, some who have entered child welfare and others who are at risk of out-of-home placement.

Maryland is in the midst of two crises that put youth and families at risk: children's mental health and the hospital overstay and overall placement crisis. While each crisis has many contributing factors, a lack of qualified social workers is a driver of both. Many providers of services to youth, Arrow included, has seen the lack of qualified social workers negatively impact our ability to operate at full capacity. As a result, children and teens either stay in inappropriate placements or don't get needed services at all. The result is costly and damaging.

This would be bad enough if the root cause was qualified individuals were unwilling to enter the social work field, but we have learned that this is not the only reason. As has become increasingly clear, the use of a single exam as the key determinant of qualification for practicing as a social worker is problematic. This is especially true as we have learned about the incredibly disproportionate results of those tests and the impact on social work candidates of color, of those with disabilities and other differing abilities. Furthermore, the ASWE's response to these disclosures makes it clear that we need a new process for ensuring that Maryland has a robust and high quality social work workforce.

**Arrow Child & Family Ministries asks this committee to give SB0871 a favorable reading.**