

March 10, 2023

LETTER OF INFORMATION

SB 871 Social Workers - Licensure Examinations - Moratorium and Workgroup SB 872 State Board of Social Work Examiners - Temporary License to Practice Social Work

Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee:

This past summer, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), the organization currently responsible for creating, implementing, and monitoring Social Work's National Licensing Examination, released a report documenting exam passage rates for each state. Data clearly shows evidence of extreme racial and age biases in the exam in Maryland and across the country. These biases contribute to a documented shortage of diverse licensed social workers.

As a concerned dean of the state's largest School of Social Work (SSW), we need to immediately address this discriminatory exam and assessment process to effect rapid equity in the nation's social work and behavioral health workforce. Specific immediate and longer-term proposed actions include:

1. Form an expert commission to examine the causes of disparities in pass rates, and temporarily suspend the test requirement for Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) until the commission presents their findings. This commission should include representatives from Maryland Schools of Social Work and other social work organizations. The work should be done within two years. During that time, all graduates from Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)-accredited schools can apply, for free, for a temporary license.
2. Make all ASWB LMSW examination prep materials free.
3. Charge a single fee for exam (no fee to retest).
4. Shrink the 90-day limit between test attempts.
5. Provide more specific feedback on incorrect answers and allow test takers to only retake the section of the exam that they did not pass.
6. De-couple the master's level ASWB exam from the interstate compact. The criteria will be based on your home state's requirements for licensure.
7. Examine other states who do not rely on exams at the entry level licensing to determine how successful those states are in supporting and monitoring the social work profession.

With Social Work workforce shortages across the nation, it is imperative for us all to work together to find responsible resolutions. Should you have any questions that we can help to inform, please contact Dr. Judy L. Postmus at dean@ssw.umaryland.edu.

Sincerely,

Judy L. Postmus, Ph.D., ACSW
Dean & Professor

Cc: Senator Mary Washington