

Madame Chairwoman and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Susanna Sung. I have been a licensed social worker in Maryland for 26 years and have volunteered with ASWB for 22 years.

I am testifying against SB 871 because I believe that placing a moratorium on the social work licensing exams will pose a risk to the public and that lowering standards is especially problematic in a field that serves the most vulnerable populations. I have worked with children and adults with trauma, substance use disorders, and those with serious mental illnesses. I know how predators and others can exploit the vulnerable, and it is critical to hold uniform standards to protect the public.

Today I bring my experience working in both examination development and the development of the Social Work Compact for multi-state practice. Social workers deserve to have practice mobility and the public needs services from competent social workers. The public deserves increased access to competent care that the Social Work Compact can provide.

At a time when practice mobility across jurisdictional lines—including rapidly evolving service modalities like telehealth—an additional benefit of an objective, uniform exam is portability.

For the military and others, for example, the exam offers opportunities beyond a single state's boundaries, which is especially important in our DMV area. Because a passing score in Maryland meets the same standard as a passing score in Washington state, jurisdictions using the exam are also supporting administrative endorsement efficiencies, better agility for social work service providers, and broader access for client populations.

My experience with exam development has shown me the steps ASWB takes to ensure fairness in its exams, including the rigorous

psychometric analysis of every single exam question to identify potential bias. In my volunteer work with ASWB on the exams, I have had the privilege to work with a diverse group of professionals who have worked in diverse fields of social work, and have many different professional journeys. I have seen the steps ASWB takes to ensure a reliable and valid exam that reflects what is critical to practice.

I also know that ASWB is exploring options for additional ways of assessing competence to ensure that entry to practice is open to everyone who meets licensure requirements; requirements that rightly include an objective and uniform demonstration of the ability to practice safely, competently, and ethically.

I urge you to consider the consequences on Maryland's ability to participate in the Social Work Compact and vote no on SB 871.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Susanna Sung, LCSW-C