



**House Health & Government Operations Committee**

**March 30, 2023**

**Senate Bill 871:**

**Social Workers - Sunset Extension, Notification of Complete Application, and Workgroup on Social Worker Examination Requirements for Licensure**

**\*\*\*SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS\*\*\***

Maryland's Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers represents social workers across the State of Maryland. As diverse members of the profession and the Chapter, we join with our colleagues to ask for a favorable report for Senate Bill 871 - Social Workers - Sunset Extension, Notification of Complete Application, and Workgroup on Social Worker Examination Requirements for Licensure **WITH AMENDMENTS**. Senate Bill 871 has two components, one of which NASW Maryland supports, and one of which we would like to see pass with stronger language.

**Sunset Extension & Notification of Complete Application**

We support the extension and request a full sunset review prior to the next extension, based on the constant stream of calls made to the NASW-MD office with concerns and complaints about the Board of Social Work Examiners' processes. We believe the Board suffers from being understaffed. We believe the new executive director of the Board is working with Board members and staff to make improvements, but we believe a review of a number of processes is called for.

We also routinely hear that while the Board is required by statute to make a decision about a license application within 60 days, applicants often are notified in those 60 days that their applications are not complete. When the additional documentation is submitted, the 60 day clock starts again. We support the inclusion of the amendment in the bill to require the board to let an applicant know within 10 days of their application if it is not complete.

**Workgroup on Social Worker Examination Requirements for Licensure**

NASW Maryland strongly supports the creation of a formal Workgroup to examine the many issues related to licensure examination. Social workers throughout Maryland have shared ideas on requirements and standards an exam must meet; proposed a competency exam focusing more objectively on a state's laws and regulations; and considered the development of an exam developed by Maryland. There are proposals to develop alternative routes to licensure and provide financial support for tutoring or re-taking the exam, and, as demonstrated in separate

legislation in front of this committee, ideas around making an exam optional and creating a temporary license.

There are many questions that need to be answered. How does having an optional exam and temporary license impact employability and salary level? How do decisions about licensing in Maryland impact the state's ability to participate in a multi-state compact? Will employers turn to other professions if there is an impression that there is no objective way to measure competency for licensed social workers?

NASW Maryland believes the Workgroup created by this legislation should be diverse in every way, and have a strong mandate. We propose the following changes to the purpose of the Workgroup as proposed in Senate Bill 871.

**Amendment No. 1**

On page 7, beginning in line 12:

**(f) The Workgroup shall:**

(1) identify alternatives to examination requirements that may be used to assess an applicant's qualifications for *a bachelor social work license or a master social worker license, a certified social worker license, or a certified social worker clinical license* under Title 19 of the Health Occupations Article;

~~(2) develop recommendations for an assessment method for independent practice to replace the Association of Social Work Boards examination; and~~

(2) examine testing options, including the development of a Maryland-specific competency examination, minimum requirements for a national exam to be approved to be taken by applicants in Maryland, utilization of exam score ranges, and any other policies that ensure a bias-free examination; and

(3) identify barriers other than examination that present barriers to a more robust, diverse, and highly qualified workforce of social workers in Maryland.

We urge you to vote in favor of Senate Bill 871 with our proposed **amendments to strengthen the purpose of the Workgroup.**

Legislative Committee

National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter