

March 28, 2023

To: Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Temeka Bailey, LCSW-C

Re: SB0871 Social Workers - Sunset Extension, Notification of Complete Application, and Workgroup on Social Worker Examination Requirements for Licensure

SB0145 State Board of Social Work Examiners - Conditional and Temporary Licenses to Practice Social Work

Position: Favorable

Thank you for taking the time to read testimony in relation to critical social work bills SB0871 and SB0145. These bills are important to me because, as a Black Licensed Clinical Social Worker, I have witnessed the harm caused to colleagues who have been repeatedly unable to pass the exam. In my 18 years of practice, I have provided supervision, support, and encouragement to several qualified peers who (despite their best efforts and meeting all other requirements) have been terminated from positions or denied promotional opportunities as a result of not passing. To receive confirmation in August of 2022 that the exam was biased, further compounded the frustration of these otherwise qualified and competent individuals.

In its existing state, the current path towards licensure is not an equitable process. An additional disparity caused by the biased exam is that it creates a barrier that prevents adequate representation in communities of color. Individuals, families and communities want and deserve to work with service providers that they trust. Based on the deeply rooted history of systemic oppression in this country, representation absolutely matters!

In alignment with Social Workers for Equity and Anti-Racism (SWEAR), I support a favorable vote on SB0871 and S0145. These bills create a diversified work group specifically focused on addressing alternatives to culturally biased exams. In addition, these bills provide an opportunity for people with Bachelors of Social Work (BSWs) and Masters of Social Work (MSWs) degrees to enter and advance in the social work profession without having to pass a biased exam that has [no evidence](#) of demonstrating high quality and ethical practice.

In addition to a **favorable vote**, I also strongly support the following amendments:

SB0871

Reinstatement of the 1-year moratorium on all social work licensing exams. While we wait for a workgroup to identify long-term solutions, social work professionals already licensed at the Master's Level (LMSWs) will continue to be denied promotions while often paying hundreds of dollars per month in mandatory supervision while they continue to try to pass the LCSW-C exam. A moratorium would pause the requirement to pass culturally biased exams to achieve licensure while allowing more social workers to become licensed under the BSWE.

Adjust language in the workgroup, per request by the Deaf and hard of hearing community, from “a representative of Gallaudet University” to “A social worker designated by the Maryland Association of the Deaf who is familiar with the licensing process for deaf and hard of hearing social workers.” A representative from Gallaudet does not ensure that the representative is Deaf or understands the exam issue from the Deaf perspective.

SB0145

Change “The BSWE may...” to “The BSWE shall...” The BSWE has historically not addressed disparities in social work licensing and opposed temporary licensing. The shift from “may” to “shall” ensures the Board of Social Work Examiners (BSWE) grants temporary licensure to eligible candidates.

Reinstate 2-year temporary license option for LCSW-Cs. Temporary licensure for LCSW-C is currently amended out of SB0145. The LCSW-C exam is just as biased as the LBSW and LMSW exam. It is imperative that we include LCSW-Cs as possible candidates for temporary licensure. Many are ready to advance in our field but are unable to do so because of the barrier of a bias exam.

Please see the attached [2-Page Policy Brief](#) and [6-Page Fact Sheet](#) for additional information.
Sincerely,

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