



Board of Social Work Examiners

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

Sondra G. Petty, Chair – Daphne McClellan, Executive Director
4201 Patterson Avenue, Suite 318 Baltimore MD 21215 Phone: 410-764-4788

2023 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL NO: SB 871
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
POSITION: Support with Amendments

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

BILL ANALYSIS: This bill, as amended, would extend the sunset date continuing the State Board of Social Work Examiners, require the Board within certain time periods, to notify an applicant of whether the application is complete and establish a workgroup on Social Worker Examination Requirements for Licensure.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: The Board of Social Work Examiners (the Board) supports SB 871 with Board amendments.

The Board receives approximately 1,500 new applications each year. Previously, the applicants were being notified of what might be missing in their applications at the time that the application was first reviewed, resulting in long delays between the initial application and the applicant finding out that the application was not complete. An internal procedure was put into place in October 2022 to remedy this problem so that applicants are notified much earlier in the process. This bill seeks to codify this internal procedure. Even though we feel that we are now doing a good job of promptly notifying applicants, we realize that there are times, such as the end of the academic year, when we receive a flood of applications. In addition, we receive many applications in the first quarter because graduating BSW (Bachelor Social Work) and MSW (Master Social Work) students are permitted to take their licensing exams during the semester they will graduate to expedite the pathway to employment. In order to accommodate those very busy times and to comply with this new requirement, we would like the deadline to be extended.

We respectfully request the following amendment:

Amendment 1

Page 2, line 23: Strike **10 DAYS** and insert **15 BUSINESS DAYS**

The Board renews licenses every two years. There are currently 17,578 active, licensed social workers in Maryland. About 2/3 (11,241) of the licensees are licensed as clinical social workers (LCSW-C). Another 1/3 are licensed as graduate social workers (LMSW), many of whom are working toward the LCSW-C credential. Many of the LMSWs and the 320 certified social workers (LCSWs) are practicing generalist or macro social work in a variety of roles throughout our State. We also license social workers at the bachelor's level and have 438 LBSWs. The

passing of this bill will ensure the continuation of the Board’s mission to protect the public from unlicensed and potentially incompetent, unethical social work practice and to promote quality of care in the fields of mental health, child welfare, aging, and many others. The Board accomplishes these objectives by providing licenses to those who meet the statutory requirements, regulating the licensees, overseeing the continuing education process and engaging in the discipline of applicants and licensees when necessary.

Currently, our board sunsets in 2024. Normally the boards are extended for ten years, this bill, as amended, only extends that date for one year to 2025.

We respectfully ask to extend the termination provisions relating to the statutory and regulatory authority of the Board, to the following:

Amendment 2

Page 3, line 3: Strike **2025** and insert **2034**.

Finally, this bill requires a Workgroup to consider alternatives to examination requirements and to develop recommendations for an assessment method for independent practice. We support the Workgroup and we are appreciative of the wide variety of people who are included. Our Board Chair is included as a workgroup member, however, due to the critical importance of this workgroup to the business of our board, we would like to have two representatives from the Board.

We respectfully request the following amendment:

Amendment 3

Page 6, line 10: Add (5) **THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** and the Chair...

Additionally, we are concerned with the directives given to the Workgroup, which appear to be very one-sided and contain assumptions which should be left up to the determination of the group itself. The two directives are to (1) develop alternatives to exam requirements for a master social worker license, a certified social worker license, and a certified social worker-clinical license and (2) develop recommendations for an assessment method for independent practice to replace the ASWB examination.

There are several problems with these directives. First of all, the Board believes that the Workgroup needs to look at the issue as a whole and be open to exploring a variety of solutions. Secondly, (1) leaves out the licensed bachelor social work category which also requires an exam and includes the LCSW category which will no longer be offered as of December 31st of this year.

We believe that these directives are the **most important** aspect of this bill. Therefore, we respectfully and **urgently** recommend the following amendments:

Amendment 4

Page 7, After line 12, Add a new **(1) IDENTIFY THE BEST METHOD TO ADDRESS CONCERNS ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORK BOARDS (ASWB) EXAMINATIONS WHILE MAINTAINING THE STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITY OF PROTECTING THE PUBLIC AND PROMOTING AND MAINTAINING HIGH PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE PRACTICE OF SOCIAL WORK.**

Line 13: Strike **(1)** and insert **(2)** and insert after the word alternatives **OR ADDITIONS**

Line 14: Insert after the word qualifications **FOR A BACHELOR SOCIAL WORKER LICENSE**, then strike **A CERTIFIED SOCIAL WORKER LICENSE**

Line 17: Strike **(2)** and insert **(3)** develop recommendations **AND RESEARCH THE PRACTICALITY** for **A COMPETENCY-BASED** assessment method

Line 18: Insert, after the word replace, **OR AUGMENT**

We realize this is late in the session to recommend these amendments, however this is our first opportunity to comment since this bill was so heavily amended in the voting session of the Senate Finance Committee. With these changes, our Board could give our whole-hearted support to SB 871.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony and the Board requests a favorable report with Board amendments on SB 871.

If you require additional information, please contact Dr. Daphne McClellan, Executive Director at (410) 764-4722 or at Daphne.McClellan@maryland.gov.

The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.