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House Bill 1120

State Board of Social Work Examiners – Continuing Education Programs –

Approval of Authorized Sponsors

Health and Government Operations Committee

**INFORMATION**

I am writing to provide important information to assist in your consideration of House Bill 1120 which requires the Maryland Board of Social Work (Board) to establish their own continuing education approval program. I am the Director of Education Programs for the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB). ASWB was formed more than 40 years ago to relieve state burdens associated with the administration of their social work regulatory mandate. As an ASWB member jurisdiction, the Board has access to continuing education services offered through the ASWB Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program. ACE has established stringent standards for the provision of continuing education programming for licensed social workers. ACE approval demonstrates that a provider or course has been rigorously reviewed and found to offer quality continuing education according to best practices. CE providers who apply for ACE approval must be able to demonstrate that they meet or exceed standards to ensure high-quality programming, whether delivered in person or via distance learning. ACE approved providers and courses satisfy CE requirements for licensure as dictated by social work regulatory boards across the United States and Canada. This communication provides more information about how the ASWB ACE program supports the Board's work and our shared public-protection missions.

**Public protection**

Individual licensed social workers, other licensed health care providers and experts, non-licensed instructors, interprofessional entities and continuing education marketing companies seek approval from continuing education accrediting bodies to offer learning activities for MARYLAND social work licensees. ACE approval is widely recognized by social work licensing boards and professionals. It serves as a mark of distinction, demonstrating that a provider or course has undergone rigorous review and adheres to best practices. The high level of scrutiny matches the kind of quality continuing education that MARYLAND social work licensees deserve. ACE approval is accepted by 63 social work boards and colleges in North America, supporting continuing competency in the social work profession. Additionally, the ASWB ACE program allows courses to be listed on the ASWB website, making it easier for social workers to find relevant and compliant courses.

ASWB ACE program allows for an extensive range of approval levels, providing licensed social workers with diverse and comprehensive options to meet their professional development needs.

ACE providers and individual courses must adhere to the State's regulations for continuing education requirements.

**Efficient Approval Process**

The ACE program offers a streamlined and efficient approval process. The ACE program offers flexibility with two approval options – individual course approval and provider approval. This accommodates both providers offering numerous courses and those offering fewer courses or new to providing continuing education. ACE providers and individual courses do not remain as ACE providers in perpetuity. With a 1-year initial approval, and depending on approval type, ACE approved programs renew for 2 or 3-year increments.

During their approval period, ACE providers may create new CE courses without additional review. This facilitates quick adaptation to evolving social work continuing educational demands. ACE providers and individual courses must adhere to rigorous standards. ACE continually monitors its approved courses. Unmonitored providers and courses put the public at risk of harm by fueling a social work licensee's miseducation.

### **Cost-Effective**

There are no fees to the Board. ACE application fees are paid by providers. ACE application processes are rigorous, reasonable and transparent. With fees ranging from \$25 for prequalification to \$125 for individual course approval and \$500-\$1,400 for provider approval, it offers a cost-effective solution for both CE providers and the State of MARYLAND.

### **Proven Track Record**

The ASWB ACE program has been successfully reviewing and approving continuing education programs for over 20 years. Its new online application process, thorough review by licensed social workers, and adherence to detailed standards make it a reliable and trusted source for CE approval.

### **Commitment to Interprofessional and Diverse Continuing Education**

Since MARYLAND social work licensees' occupations span all corners of the State in a diverse array of general and specialized areas, their access to continuing education should have the same diverse span. ASWB ACE is a partner with Joint Accreditation Interprofessional Continuing Education, working alongside other healthcare professionals' continuing education accrediting bodies that include psychologists, nurses, physicians, dietitians, physician associates, dentists, pharmacists, optometrists and athletic trainers.

### **Maryland's Interest in Social Work Continuing Education**

ASWB ACE supports the State by eliminating significant costs and administrative burdens. ASWB ACE program presents a well-established and efficient solution. It aligns with the needs of Maryland social work professionals, ensuring access to high-quality continuing education opportunities. With ACE approval, Maryland CE businesses (public and private) can strengthen their reach and compete with national CE organizations.

Respectfully submitted:

Dionne M. Brown-Bushrod, LCSW-C

Director of Education Programs

ASWB ACE