



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

Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners
4201 Patterson Ave
Baltimore, MD 21215

**2024 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL NO: HB 1120
COMMITTEE: HGO
POSITION: Oppose

TITLE: State Board of Social Work Examiners – Continuing Education Programs – Approval of Authorized Sponsors

BILL ANALYSIS: This proposed legislation requires the State Board of Social Work Examiners to establish a process to review and approve certain persons as authorized sponsors of social work continuing education programs, subject to a requirement that at least one pathway for approval does not require an applicant to have the approval of a national or regional organization.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: The Board of Social Work Examiners (the “Board”) opposes HB 1120.

On December 11, 2023, the Board’s COMAR regulations became effective to remove the section on Board-authorized provisional sponsors. Regarding the closure of the Provisional Sponsorship Program (PSP), here are the steps the Board performed to reach this conclusion:

- The Board discussed this issue at three Open Board meetings in February, March, and April 2019.
- On April 8, 2019, BSWE letter was sent to all organizations/agencies that were currently Provisional Sponsors explaining their options on how to proceed with their sponsorship.
- The acceptance of new applications for the Provisional Sponsorship Program ended on May 1, 2019.
- On January 24, 2020, a second BSWE letter was sent to the Provisional Sponsors that had not responded to the April 2019 letter requesting their decision. This letter included the following statements: “After the Board reviewed all aspects of this Program including limited resources and revised Board priorities, the Board has decided to discontinue the Provisional Sponsorship Program effective May 1, 2020. Additional proposed individual training applications will be accepted until April 15, 2020, and the training must be conducted by December 31, 2020.”

- On January 1, 2021, the Board Authorized Provisional Sponsorship Program ended and the link on the continuing education webpage to these trainings was closed.
- When this change occurred, the Board posted information on the CE webpage under Frequently Asked Questions (12) which states the option of contacting state, regional, or national social work associations including, but not limited to, the NASW-National or the Association of Social Work Boards' (NASW) Approved Continuing Education Program (ACE) to become an Approved Provider. Additional consideration would be to explore other state social work licensing boards which provide or approve trainings/programs relevant to the professional development of social workers.

The Continuing Education (CE) staff worked with Provisional Sponsors to assist them in becoming Board Authorized Sponsors prior to the proposed regulation change, thus assuring that Board Authorized Sponsors were able to continue to provide CEUs. The main reason for the change was the fact that approving an individual, agency, or organization to become sponsors was staff intensive. At the time, the CE Committee and staff were dealing with a backlog of continuing education audit cases and staff shortages. With other social work organizations available and willing to assist and approve potential sponsors (i.e., NASW and ASWB), the Committee felt that discontinuing this PSP would allow Board staff to address the issues that are more pertinent to licensees - such as continuing education audits and the increased questions received on a wide range of education and training topics.

The number of Maryland Board Authorized Sponsors currently approved are listed on the Board's website (<https://health.maryland.gov/bswe/Documents/CEU/List-of-Sponsors.pdf>). This includes 415 individual/agencies/organizations. In addition, licensed social workers attend ASWB and NASW-National approved trainings along with other national social work accredited organizations. If a university is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), trainings are available from their Schools of Social Work. There is no demand to have more program options since licensed social workers have a vast array of approved trainings provided by organizations on a wide range of topics and learning activities.

For these reasons, the Board of Social Work Examiners urges an unfavorable report on HB 1120.

For more information, please contact Karen Richards, LCSW-C, Executive Director at 410-740-4722 or at karen.richards2@maryland.gov.

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