To the Chair and Committee Members:

My name is Stacey Owens. I am a licensed social worker in Maryland.

I am asking that you vote no on SB 379.

- I am testifying against SB 379 because I believe that removing the requirement for a social work licensing exams will pose a risk to the public, and that lowering professional standards is especially concerning in a field that serves people who are vulnerable.
- Additionally, I believe that removing the licensing exam requirement poses a risk to the livelihood and earning potential of licensed social workers in Maryand.
- The bill presumes that competence is established solely through the completion of an education program. This conclusion threatens public protection and diminishes the State's regulatory accountability.
- Education programs, though accredited, are varied in their instructional approaches and student experiences. A licensing exam, on the other hand, is a uniform, measure. It gets its validity through an analysis of the practice of social work and ensures that exam content reflects knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for safe, competent, and ethical practice.
- Social work is a health profession. Just like other health professions such as physicians, nurses and psychologists, the social work exam is created based on what those working in real life settings define as critical entry to practice knowledge.
- Removing an examination requirement will devalue the social work profession and decrease our parity with other health professionals.
- It will also prevent Maryland from becoming part of the social work compact, which will in turn diminish the earning potential and licensure portability eligibility for licensed social workers Maryland.
- In conclusion, I urge you to consider the unintended consequences of this bill. Social work is a valuable profession; an exam is a vital part of identifying that value and protecting the public by evaluating competency.

I again ask that you vote no on SB379. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

-Stacey Owens, M.S.W., LCSW-C