

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee

I am honored to submit this testimony in strong support of Maryland Senate Bill 379 (SB 379), which seeks to eliminate examination requirements for bachelor and master social work licenses and to increase consumer representation on the State Board of Social Work Examiners.

As the Chair of the Department of Social Work at Coppin State University and a practicing LMSW therapist, I recognize the urgent need to remove unnecessary barriers to licensure that disproportionately impact aspiring social workers from diverse backgrounds. The proposed elimination of examination requirements aligns with a growing body of research demonstrating that licensure exams present significant structural barriers for individuals from historically marginalized communities, particularly Black, Indigenous, and people of color candidates. Studies have shown disparities in pass rates, raising concerns that these exams do not effectively measure competency but instead function as gatekeeping mechanisms that restrict access to the profession. By removing this requirement, Maryland will foster a more inclusive and representative social work workforce, ensuring that skilled professionals can serve communities in need without undue hardship.

Furthermore, the proposed modification to the composition of the State Board of Social Work Examiners—expanding consumer representation from two to four members—is a critical step toward enhancing public trust and accountability. As we know, **representation matters**. Including a broader range of consumer voices ensures that the Board reflects the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of the communities social workers serve. This change will promote transparency, equity, and a more holistic approach to regulating the profession.

Maryland is facing a pressing need for well-trained social workers, particularly in underserved areas where mental health services, child welfare support, and community interventions are desperately needed. The passage of SB 379 will help address workforce shortages by streamlining the licensure process while upholding the high ethical and professional standards of the field. By removing restrictive examination requirements and enhancing Board representation, we take a bold step toward equity, accessibility, and justice in social work.

I urge this committee to vote **in favor** of SB 379 and support this necessary reform to strengthen Maryland's social work profession and its commitment to serving the most vulnerable populations. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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District 43A