



February 4, 2025

Senate Bill 379 - State Board of Social Work Examiners - Membership and Examination Requirements

Senate Finance Committee

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) is an association of private child caring organizations providing foster care, group homes, and other services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. The members of MARFY represent providers who serve Maryland's most vulnerable children who are in out of home placements due to abuse, neglect or severe mental health, and medical needs. We operate group homes, treatment foster care programs and independent living programs, primarily serving the adoptive and foster care population as well as a juvenile services population.

We strongly support Senate Bill 379 which seeks to expand pathways to becoming a licensed social worker in Maryland. Specifically, this legislation would remove the exam requirement for individuals seeking licensure at the Bachelors (LBSW) and Masters (LMSW) level licensure, addressing critical workforce shortages and improving equity in employment opportunities within this essential profession.

Maryland, like many states, is facing an acute shortage of social workers. The demand for qualified professionals to support our communities, particularly in areas of mental health, child welfare, and crisis intervention, continues to grow. However, the current licensure exam requirement has proven to be a significant barrier for many qualified individuals, limiting the pool of available social workers. Removing this exam requirement will allow well-trained individuals to enter the workforce more efficiently, filling critical gaps in services and ensuring Maryland residents receive the care and support they need.

Removing the exam requirement will not only diversify the social work profession but also strengthen culturally competent care. Individuals who come from the communities they serve bring invaluable lived experiences and insights that enhance the effectiveness of social work interventions. Expanding pathways to licensure ensures that our workforce better reflects the populations they serve, leading to improved trust, engagement, and outcomes for historically marginalized communities.

It is also extremely important that Maryland advocates for these alternate pathways to be recognized and supported if SB174 - Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact is passed.

We want to ensure that when these alternative pathways to licensure requirements become recognized in Maryland, that this does not bar Marylanders who have taken these additional pathways to licensure from being eligible for a multistate license under the compact. It is our hope that Maryland continues to advocate for smart changes that allow individuals to grow and thrive in the field of social work and the populations they serve.

By passing this legislation, Maryland can take a bold and necessary step toward strengthening its social work workforce, promoting equity in employment, and ensuring high-quality care for all residents. We ask this Committee and the General Assembly to support this bill and remove unnecessary barriers that prevent qualified individuals from entering the profession. Thank you for your time and consideration.

For more information call or email:

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