

Dear Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

I am writing to request that you codify workgroup recommendations and **find a favorable report for HB1521 as introduced**. This bill will increase accountability to the Board of Social Work Examiners (BSWE) by adding two more consumer members, and it will also create a more equitable path to social work without sacrificing social work competence.

As a social work manager for over 15 years, I know firsthand the challenges in hiring caused by the inequities in the social work exams. Over the course of my career, I've known many very talented social workers who struggled to pass the ASWB. In my experience, there is no correlation between passing the exam and providing excellent social work services. Some of my colleagues who have taken the exam over 10 times before passing are now leaders in the social work field.

As you might know, since the pandemic, hiring has become even more difficult. I work with several programs that are struggling to hire social workers and cannot fulfill critical services as a result. Based on ASWB data from 2011-2021, Maryland would have an additional [1227](#) licensed social workers if every demographic group passed at the same rate as white social workers. Imagine what an impact these social workers could make on our underserved communities if they were able to practice! LBSWs and LMSWs are usually the ones doing the incredibly important but unglamorous direct care work in hospitals, community mental health centers, and foster care agencies. A more diverse workforce enhances cultural humility and demonstrably improves outcomes for clients from varied racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Clients deserve to see a workforce that represents them, and this bill will allow that to happen without sacrificing social work competence.

Every new BSW graduates with at least 400 hours of supervised practice, and every MSW graduates with at least 900 hours of supervised practice. The best way to assess foundational social work skills is by careful observation by supervisors during education and supervised practice. Social work's rich tradition of field education and mentorship by more seasoned social workers is a far better tool to catch and address problems.

Maryland has long emphasized equity in a variety of other programs, and the field of social work should be no different. We have a wonderful opportunity to remove outdated, biased licensing models and instead modernize the social work licensing process in our state. Thank you for accepting my testimony. Please find a favorable report on SB379.

Sincerely,  
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