

March 11, 2025

Testimony for House Health and Government Operations Committee

Re: HB1521 State Board of Social Work Examiners - Membership and Examination Requirements

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

My name is Will Doyle. I am a clinical social worker, Maryland resident, and the Vice President of Housing First at Pathways to Housing DC.

I fervently support **HB1521** in its current form. This bill repeals the examination requirements for bachelor and master social worker licenses, which aligns with the recommendations of Maryland's Workgroup on Social Worker Requirements for Licensure. Maryland formed a robust and diverse Workgroup that fully attended to its mandates, considering data and evidence to support its findings. From watching all of the open meetings, a range of voices and positions were expressed and considered. This included 2 representatives each from the ASWB and the BSWE, who were the only Workgroup members to oppose the recommendation to eliminate the ASWB exams. Besides their ongoing opportunities to share data to support their positions, both the ASWB CEO and the BSWE Executive Director also provided formal presentations to the Workgroup.

The ASWB and BSWE will certainly rehash their opposition to this bill through their testimonies, **but will not have data to back up their claims that the ASWB exams are valid, reliable and objective measures of social work competence and ethical practice. Without such evidence, there is simply no reason not to accept the recommendations of the Workgroup and pass this bill.** Repeating false claims does not make them true. You will also likely hear from social workers who oppose this bill due to concerns about unintended consequences without any data to support their positions. I urge you to prioritize addressing the certain financial, mental and emotional harms that the ASWB exams inflict upon Maryland residents.

Passing **HB1521** will remove an unnecessary barrier for competent and safe social workers, enabling them to secure higher paying jobs that require licensure and addressing our workforce shortage. Given the known disparities in ASWB exam pass rates based on age, race and language, we will increase the diversity of our workforce and better match those in need of social work services.

Pathways to Housing DC provides Housing First and homeless outreach services in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. As an employer of social workers, **Pathways to Housing DC is absolutely thrilled to hire qualified social workers who have not passed an ASWB exam.** Being able to hire social workers who have not had to face the discriminatory barrier of the ASWB exams means that we will no longer be complicit in an ableist, ageist, and racist licensing system. We look forward to the passing of this legislation to increase our access to qualified social workers and expand our services in Maryland.

Based on the BSWE's repeated blind allegiance to the ASWB at the expense of Marylanders, I fully support adding 2 consumer members.

Thank you for considering my input. I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Will Doyle, LICSW
College Park, MD
District 21
Vice President of Housing First
Pathways to Housing DC