

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL #1521**  
**State Board of Social Work Examiners - Membership and Examination**  
**Requirements**  
*Health and Government Operations*  
**Date: 03/13/25**

**This testimony is submitted on behalf of The University of Maryland Baltimore School of Social Work Student Government Association (SGA), which represents the student body at School of Social Work. The SGA strongly supports House Bill 1521** which will remove the exam requirement from the Licensed Master (LMSW) of Social Work and Licensed Bachelor of Social Work (LBSW) licensing process. Social work students do not oppose taking an exam to achieve our licensure, we oppose taking the current exam. The current exam has shown a significant bias in the areas of race, age and language. This issue has been reviewed by the state legislature and last session created a work group. The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) has failed to address the concerns. Testing for competency is not an adequate reason to keep a clearly biased exam.

The ASWB has compiled data that shows from 2011 to 2021 93 percent of white students passed the LMSW exam on their first attempt, while only 55.5 percent of Black students and 79 percent of Hispanic students did the same.<sup>1</sup> These statistics point to a systemic issue that cannot be ignored. As a profession that highlights social justice, being required to take an exam with clear biases is unacceptable. By passing 1521 it will provide a remedy by no longer requiring the passing of a biased exam.

The State Legislature approved a workgroup in 2023 to examine the exam. The workgroup found the exam to have the previously stated biases and recommended, “LBSW and LMSW licensure will continue to have the same educational and experiential requirements. The recommended change is to remove the requirement to take the ASWB exam in order to obtain licensure.”<sup>2</sup> HB1521 as proposed will implement the recommendations of the workgroup.

The ASWB states in its exam handbook, “As a reminder, licensing exams measure the minimum level of competence to practice, not skills that may be acquired as one moves through a social work career.”<sup>3</sup> While proving competence is important for professionals entering the workforce, it is generally accepted that standardized exams rarely prove the competence of a candidate, rather they are a tool to test knowledge of a subject. We support the efforts of the exam test for knowledge and competence, but not at the expense of our code of ethics. We believe

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<sup>1</sup> (Schelle, 2024) [UMB News](#)

<sup>2</sup> (Licensure, 2024) [Workgroup](#)

<sup>3</sup> (Association of Social Work Boards, 2024) [Guidebook](#)

that the ASWB's data shows this exam violates everything we have learned about social justice and ethics.

MSW students are required to participate in over 1000 hours of field work during our two-year program to graduate. During that time, we spend at least an hour a week of individual supervision from the licensed social worker we are working under. Furthermore, after achieving an LMSW social workers have to work under a Licensed Certified Social Worker – Clinical (LCSW-C) for an additional 3000 hours before being able to pursue a Licensed Certified Social Worker license (LCSW). As students we rely on our field supervisors to guide us to being competent social workers. The LCSW-Cs that we train under are required to confirm our proficiency in all the competencies outlined by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). MSW graduates are ready to serve the citizens of Maryland and the obstacles of this exam hurt social workers and their clients.

We urge this committee to follow the recommendations of the workgroup and pass House Bill 1521. Licensed social workers are already training students and new social workers and ensure that competent social work is being provided. The social work community works hard to ensure that our clients receive the services that they need, and we need you.

Thank you  
Courtney Fullwood  
President UMB SSW SGA E-Board