



Association of Social Work Boards

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Brian D. Philson, MSW, LMSW, ACSW
Michigan

President-Elect

Kenya Anderson, LMSW
Tennessee

Secretary

D. Endsley Real, MPH, LCSW
Georgia

Treasurer

Géraldine Poirier Baiani, RSW
New Brunswick

Directors at Large

Sonia Andhi Bilkhu, BSW, MSW, RSW
British Columbia

Brian Brumley, LMSW-IPR
Texas

Brenda Dennis
Arizona

Adrienne Ekas, Ph.D., LCSW-C
Maryland

Vikki Erickson, BSW, MSW, LCSW
Nevada

D. Scott Stephens, Ph.D.
South Carolina

Stephan A. Viehweg, LCSW, IECMH-E®,
CYC-P
Indiana

Chief Executive Officer

Stacey Hardy-Chandler, Ph.D., JD, LCSW, PGDip

17126 Mountain Run Vista Ct.
Culpeper, VA 22701

t / 800.225.6880

f / 540.829.0562

info@aswb.org

aswb.org

Delegate Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
Health and Government Operations Committee
Maryland General Assembly
241 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for House Bill 0345, "Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact" and raising awareness of conflicts with Senate Bill 0379

Tuesday, January 21, 2025

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk and Distinguished Committee Members:

My name is Dr. Stacey Hardy-Chandler. I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), the nonprofit professional regulatory association that supports the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners in the fulfillment of its public protection mandate. I write to your committee today in support of House Bill 0345, "Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact" and also to raise awareness of complications that the recently introduced Senate Bill 0379 will present for Maryland's adoption of the licensure compact.

Founded more than 45 years ago, ASWB is the only nonprofit organization dedicated to social work regulation representing all 64 state and provincial governments. ASWB has been working on the compact since 2021 when we received a grant from the Department of Defense to work with the Council of State Governments to develop model legislation. Compact legislation was published in 2023, and ASWB received funding in 2024 from the Health Resources and Services Administration to support the implementation of the compact. Ongoing work continues with support from the Council of State Governments providing expert guidance and the Defense State Liaison Office offering information to legislators to expand state adoption.

There is considerable need for an interstate licensure compact to improve access to quality social work services. Workforce shortages, increased demand for care, and increasingly complicated social issues are all challenges in need of solutions. The goal of the compact is to eliminate barriers to practice and to client care, along with ensuring public protection. Through the compact, the public has greater access to professional social work services. The compact also allows social workers to ensure continuity of care when clients travel or relocate. Further, the compact reduces administrative burdens associated with holding multiple state licenses, thus enhancing the mobility of licensed social workers. ASWB is committed to supporting the licensure compact as a valuable foundation for cross-jurisdictional common ground for the benefit of our members, the profession, and the public.

As of my submission of this testimony, 22 states across the United States have enacted legislation to adopt the social work licensure compact, and 12 additional states – including Maryland – have legislation currently pending. With more states joining the compact, more mental health professionals will have the ability to serve client populations. The key benefit to us all is access: increasing people's access to social workers and expanding social workers' access to broader communities. Adoption of the social work licensure compact legislation will allow Maryland to expand its communities' access to the critical services provided by the social work profession while simultaneously ensuring consistency regarding what it means to receive those services from an individual using the title of "licensed social worker."

Core to our mission is accountability and public protection through the regulation of safe, competent, and ethical social work practices. Objective entry-to-practice competence measurements help us achieve that mandate. Our work ensures that the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners, as an ASWB member board, has access to the data and tools required to provide oversight for the social work profession, including initial licensure decisions. House Bill 0345 ensures the continuation of the high standards and integrity befitting professional regulation. It is because of the integrity of our work on behalf of our members that I must also raise concerns with Senate Bill 0379.

Senate Bill 0379 eliminates the requirement of competence assessment as part of the social work licensure process in Maryland. As this effectively eliminates the licensing examination requirement for the bachelors, masters, and clinical categories of social work licensure in Maryland, Senate Bill 0379 stands in conflict with the goals of the interstate social work licensure compact. Noting the importance of consistency of standards across jurisdictions, the compact requires social workers to take and pass the qualifying national exam that corresponds with the category of multistate license sought by a practitioner.

The removal of the examination requirement diminishes accountability to the public we serve. In this instance, the removal of the examination requirement also jeopardizes Maryland's ability to participate in and enjoy the benefits of the interstate social work licensure compact. This poses a challenge to not only the state's social work workforce but also the communities they serve.

I applaud Delegates Kerr and Woods for their sponsorship of House Bill 0345, and I encourage the members of the Health and Government Operations Committee to send this legislation to the full Maryland General Assembly for consideration. I also caution this committee's colleagues in the Senate with regards to Senate Bill 0379 due to the reasons stated above.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the members of this committee and other stakeholders to ensure that the people of Maryland have access to a robust workforce of licensed professionals who have demonstrated the knowledge and skills to serve their communities. Please contact us if we may be able to provide any additional information or clarification about the importance of the interstate social work licensure compact. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Stacey D. Hardy-Chandler, PhD, JD, LCSW, PGDip
Chief Executive Officer
Association of Social Work Boards

ASWB is a nonprofit association whose members comprise the 64 social work licensing authorities from the United States and Canada. ASWB is recognized under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as an entity that provides programs and services to social work regulatory boards in promoting uniformity and lessening burdens on state governments.