



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

DATE: March 13, 2025

RE: HB1521 – State Board of Social Work Examiners –
Membership and Examination Requirements

The MLLC supports HB1521 – State Board of Social Work Examiners – Membership and Examination Requirements

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB1521.

This bill seeks to reform the licensing and governance structure of social work regulation in Maryland. The bill eliminates the examination requirement for obtaining a bachelor or master social worker license, removing a barrier to entry into the profession. It also expands the membership of the State Board of Social Work Examiners from 12 to 14 members, increasing the number of consumer representatives from two to four. These changes aim to promote accessibility to the social work field, address workforce shortages, and ensure broader public representation in the board's oversight. The bill is set to take effect on October 1, 2025.

HB1521 addresses barriers that Latino individuals face in entering the social work profession. Data from the Council on Social Work Education indicates that only 14% of new social workers identify as Hispanic/Latino.¹ This underrepresentation is partly due to systemic challenges, including disparities in licensure exam pass rates. In Maryland, the first-time pass rate for the Licensed Certified Social Worker-Clinical (LCSW-C) exam is 65.6% for Hispanic/Latinx test-takers, compared to 88.6% for white test-takers.² By eliminating the examination requirement for bachelor and master social worker licenses, this bill aims to reduce these disparities, facilitating greater inclusion of Latino professionals in social work.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB1521.

¹ National Association of Social Workers. *New Report Provides Insights into New Social Workers' Demographics, Income, and Job Satisfaction*. NASW, 2025, <https://www.socialworkers.org/News/News-Releases/ID/2262>.

² Maryland General Assembly. *Testimony on Social Work Licensing Exam Disparities*. Maryland House Government Operations Committee, 2023, https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2023/hgo/1rEByRIHJsI0x1bbtu-87qoY60oy2MDAR.pdf.