

February 10, 2026

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I am humbly requesting a **favorable** report on **SB18: State Board of Social Work Examiners - Conditional License to Practice Social Work - Revisions**. Maryland Social Workers of all ages, races, ethnicities, languages, and abilities have been advocating for Social Work Licensure Reform for years. Our latest advocacy efforts began in August 2022, after an ASWB [data release](#) confirmed what we already knew to be true - biased licensing exams are preventing dedicated Marylanders from obtaining licensure and working within our profession.

I continue to write to your committee year after year because this issue matters to me and my colleagues, and the clients whom we serve. As bilingual social workers, we continue to see a great need for social workers who understand our clients who speak American Sign Language, Spanish, Chinese, French, Korean, Amharic, Urdu, or one of the 130 other languages spoken in our state. Support for immigrant communities is critical, now more than ever. It is essential we have social workers who can truly empathize and understand our clients' needs and lived experiences.

**We must ensure equitable pathways to licensure for Marylanders from all walks of life.**

Not just those who are young, white, middle class, English-speakers who grew-up in the DC suburbs like myself. Maryland is an extremely diverse state, and our social workers should reflect this.

In addition, **I respectfully request consideration of the following amendments:**

- Rename the alternative pathway "**Practice-Based Licensure**" to accurately reflect that it confers all full professional rights and responsibilities of social work licensure.
- **Allow up to four years** to complete the required 1,500 hours of supervised practice. This flexibility recognizes common life circumstances that may temporarily affect hours worked while maintaining the total supervision requirement.
- Ensure **supervisor responsibilities are identical** for both practice-based and examination pathways.
- Specific language that allows **supervised practice hours accrued during this period to count** toward future independent licensure requirements.
- **Maintain confidentiality** of pathway status between the licensee and the Board.
- Require annual BSWE reporting on licensure numbers and disciplinary outcomes by pathway to **support transparent, data-driven evaluation** of the policy's impact.

Thank you for your consideration of SB18 and for your continued commitment to building Maryland's behavioral health workforce. I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,  
Maria Smith, MSW, LCSW-C  
District 18