

SB874_SW_KennedyKrieger_Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Emily Arneson

Position: FAV



DATE: March 3, 2026 COMMITTEE: Senate Finance
BILL NO: Senate Bill 874
BILL TITLE: Health Occupations - Social Workers - Scopes of Practice
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports Senate Bill 874 - Health Occupations - Social Workers - Scopes of Practice.

Bill Summary:

Senate Bill 874 updates and clarifies terminology used in social work licensure.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive, and physical challenges. Kennedy Krieger's services include inpatient, outpatient, school-based, and community-based programs. Over 27,000 individuals receive services annually at Kennedy Krieger. We employ more than 3400 persons who play a vital role in our mission to transform the lives of children with disorders of the brain.

At Kennedy Krieger, clinical social workers (more than 100 employed by us) are an essential part of our interdisciplinary teams of professionals. Through their work our clinical social workers utilize evidence-based and evidence informed interventions to enable individuals and their families to draw upon their natural strengths to manage the ongoing realities and stresses of disability, mental health conditions and profound medical conditions that affect individual, family and community functioning and relationships. Additionally, bachelor's level social workers provide impactful case management and care coordination services. Additionally, we have robust clinical training pathways for individuals at the bachelors, masters, post master's level and doctoral level. Clinical social workers provide the following clinical services, as determined by individual and family needs, through any one of the department's inpatient or outpatient programs at Kennedy Krieger.

- Clinical evaluation of individual and family functioning
- Development of an individualized treatment plan
- Individual, family, and group therapy and counseling
- Parent training
- Educational, support and stress management groups
- Case management

Rationale:

Senate Bill 874 serves to provide clear delineation regarding the alignment of professional social work activities in the areas of education, training, supervision and scope of practice to support the best interests of the public. This guidance also serves to preserve the professional integrity and efficacy of social workers in Maryland. This clarity ensures that competent, ethical and evidence-based social work services remain available for those in need. Additionally, maintaining clear professional boundaries supports effective utilization of resources to aid individuals in achieving identified goals.

Kennedy Krieger requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 874.

SB874 Health Occupations - Social Workers - Scopes

Uploaded by: Dean Judy Postmus

Position: FWA

**Testimony for SB 874
Health Occupations - Social Workers - Scopes of Practice
March 3, 2026
Support with Amendment**

Thank you, Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Finance Committee for addressing this important issue and recognizing the vital role of social workers in Maryland. As dean of the University of Maryland, School of Social Work, I appreciate the opportunity to support all efforts to strengthen Maryland's Social Work Practice Act. I also thank the sponsor, Senator Washington, for her leadership and commitment to strengthening Maryland's behavioral health workforce.

While I support the goal of SB 874 to update the Social Work Practice Act to address current challenges in social work practice, a legislative proposal with such sweeping changes requires careful examination and participation of invested stakeholders.

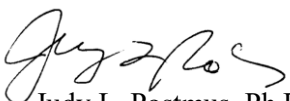
There are important areas of current social work practice that SB 874 removes that require careful examination before elimination including:

- a. Removal of "counseling for alcohol and drug use and addictive behavior", which is currently an area of practice legislation delineated in 2020;
- b. Removal of restriction for a LBSW or LMSW to be the sole owner of a private practice, which was a restriction that legislation added in 2017;
- c. Removal, in its entirety, the LCSW license category. In Maryland, we currently have LCSWs practicing in MD and while legislation passed in 2017 that no NEW LCSW licenses would be issued, those who hold the LCSW license are currently permitted to practice and renew their LCSW;
- d. Removal from the LCSW-C scope of practice to petition for an emergency petition, which is an important ethical responsibility for clinical behavioral health professionals.
- e. Removal of language that defines the breath of advanced generalist practice (macro social work) from the scope of practice and replacing it with clinical practice terms.

While we have reviewed several versions of suggested amendments, they are not consistent and also create additional areas that require careful attention. Respectfully, I submit an amendment that would require the BSWE to develop revisions for the Social Work Practice Act which include the areas mentioned in the bill and submit a legislative proposal for your review in the 2027 legislative session. There is still confusion regarding the distinctions between private practice and independent practice and their relationship to the specific categories of licensure an individual holds (LBSW, LMSW, LCSW, LCSW-C) and further language in the statute could clarify practice questions.

Thank you again for your dedication to this important issue. I respectfully request a favorable committee report that would charge the BSWE to prepare revisions to the Social Work Practice Act for action in the 2027 legislative session.

Respectfully submitted by,



Judy L. Postmus, Ph.D., ACSW, Dean & Professor

Cc: Senator M. Washington

NASW Maryland - 2026 SB 874 FWA - Social Workers -

Uploaded by: Karessa Proctor

Position: FWA



**Testimony before the Senate Finance Committee
March 3, 2026**

Senate Bill 874 - Health Occupations - Social Workers - Scopes of Practice

SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) Committee on Aging, we would like to express our concerns with the way Senate Bill 874 is written and offer an amendment.

Scope of practice laws govern public protection, workforce pathways, supervision, and liability. When legislation rewrites major portions of a profession's practice act without structured input from the licensing board, schools of social work, and professional associations, it is deeply concerning.

Scope of practice is not minor statutory language and NASW Maryland believes to tackle the important task of updating this law entirely through amendments to SB 874 in the short time remaining in session is not realistic. The number of structural changes in SB 874 makes this more than a technical cleanup or update. It is essentially a reworking of the framework of social workers' scope of practice. That requires thoughtful collaboration, not patchwork revisions under time pressure.

Historically, changes to the Social Work Practice Act have involved collaboration among the Board, associations, and educators. The issue here is not that change was proposed, it is that the profession was not meaningfully engaged in drafting it. We support an effort that gathers these crucial stakeholders to take on this task, giving it the time and thought needed to ensure there are no unintended consequences, and to take into account the evolution of Maryland's Health Occupations Title 19. History matters, and to disregard "how" and "why" items are in the Code ignores important lessons learned.

SB 874 makes sweeping structural and definitional changes that create confusion, undo carefully negotiated statutory updates from recent years, and risks unintended harm to multiple segments of the profession particularly macro and advanced generalist social workers. Here are some examples of what SB 874 does:

- Revises the statutory definition of the "practice of social work" in a way that removes key references to CSWE-accredited degrees, supervision, and the full breadth of macro practice, potentially narrowing how the profession is framed in law;

(over)

- Eliminates explicit language affirming that social workers may provide counseling for alcohol, substance use, and addictive behaviors language that was added in 2020 to resolve prior ambiguity;
- Removes existing prohibitions preventing LBSWs and LMSWs from serving as sole owners of private practices, creating uncertainty about legislative intent and potentially altering long-standing safeguards;
- Revises the definition of “independent practice” and deletes references to bachelor’s- and master’s-level distinctions that were recently added to statute, creating confusion about scope boundaries;
- Removes language allowing LMSWs to formulate diagnoses under the supervision of an LCSW-C, raising concerns about how clinical competencies will be developed during supervised practice;
- Deletes all statutory references to the LCSW license category without clarifying how currently licensed LCSWs will be treated moving forward;
- Removes the express authority of LCSW-Cs to petition for emergency psychiatric evaluations, limiting an important crisis intervention responsibility;
- Deletes foundational language stating that licensees may practice only within the scope of the specific category of license issued, potentially weakening clear scope-of-practice guardrails.

We are appreciative that the sponsor is welcoming of amendments, but draft amendments in response to some of the concerns above have resulted in even more concerns. Time needs to be given to ensuring language is consistent, references to other parts of the Code are appropriate, and other items have not been left out. Above all, scope must stay intact at all licensure levels.

Our amendment would be to strike the specifics of the bill and require the convening of the social worker licensing board, social worker associations, and social worker institutions of higher education to take on the task of updating Title 19 of the Health Occupations Code, with a goal of having legislation introduced in the Maryland General Assembly in January of 2027. NASW Maryland would be more than happy to take a lead role in that effort, with or without legislation.

Respectfully,

Karessa Proctor, BSW, MSW
Executive Director, NASW-MD

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Uploaded by: State of Maryland (MD)

Position: FWA



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners
4201 Patterson Ave., 3rd Floor
Baltimore, MD 21215

2026 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL NO: SB 874
COMMITTEE: Finance
POSITION: Support with Amendments

TITLE: Health Occupations – Social Workers – Scopes of Practice

BILL ANALYSIS: For the purpose of altering the scopes of practice for licensed social workers.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: The Board of Social Work Examiners (the “Board”) supports SB 874 with amendments. The Board supports the intent of the bill to clarify what a licensed social worker can do; however, there are several areas which are somewhat confusing and negated changes made by recent 2020 legislation. The Board urges the bill sponsor to make the following amendments:

Amendment 1: Page 2: Line 9 – leave in” bachelor social work or master.” Legislation passed in 2020 added the definition of independent practice. It is not clear why this language is being changed.

Amendment 2: Page 4: Line 17 – Leave in “Counseling for alcohol and drug use and addictive behavior.” This was added in the 2020 legislative session to clarify that it is within the scope of practice for all social work licenses to provide counseling for alcohol, drug and other addictive behaviors.

Amendment 3: Page 5: Lines 24-30; Page 6: Lines 1-3; and Page 8: Lines 10-15: these lines completely delete references to the Licensed Certified Social Worker (LCSW) license. While the Board no longer issues this license, there are still 274 active LCSW license holders in the state. If statute language is completely removed regarding the LCSW, will they be unable to renew their license. Should consideration be given to grandfathering the current LCSWs to the LCSW-C license level?

Amendment 4: Page 6: Lines 11-12 – “petitioning for emergency evaluation...” is removed for the Licensed Certified Social Worker – Clinical (LCSW-C) and it is not listed elsewhere in the bill. This is an important provision to the statute and removing it for the LCSW-C will significantly limit their scope of practice.

Amendment 5: Page 7: Line 31 - the bill removes the language that a licensed bachelor social worker may not “Engage in private practice.” While they can work in private practice, an LBSW cannot be the sole owner of private practice.

Amendment 6: Page 7: Lines 28-29 – Keep in the current use of “make a clinical diagnosis of behavioral health or emotions disorder.” The bill proposes changing the language to “diagnose a mental, emotional, or behavioral disorder.” The use of “mental disorder” has been gradually removed over the years due to stigma associated with the use of the term “mental.”

Amendment 7: Page 8: Line 9 – as above, the bill removes the language that a licensed master social worker may not “Engage in private practice.” While they can work in private practice, an LBSW cannot be the sole owner of private practice.

Thank you for considering this testimony. The Board of Social Work Examiners respectfully requests a favorable vote with amendments on SB 874.

If you require additional information please contact Karen Richards, Executive Director of the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners at (410) 764-4722 or karen.richards2@maryland.gov or Lillian Reese, Board Legislative Liaison, at (443) 794-4757 or lillian.reese@maryland.gov.

The opinion of the Board expressed in this document does not necessarily reflect that of the Department of Health or the Administration.

Testimony in Opposition to SB 874(final).pdf

Uploaded by: Daphne McClellan

Position: UNF

TO: The Honorable Beidle, Chair and Members, Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Daphne McClellan, PhD, LMSW
DATE: March 3, 2026
RE: **OPPOSE** – Senate Bill 874- Health Occupations - Social Workers - Scopes of Practice

I am writing in opposition to SB 874 which alters the scopes of practice for licensed social workers; and generally relates to the practice of social work in the State.

The purpose of this bill is unclear. The scope of practice for all four Social Work licensing categories was rewritten. A major overhaul of this Social Work practice act was undertaken in 2017 and implemented with appropriate regulations in 2019. Other aspects have been added since then. As you are aware, this is not a profession that has been neglected by the legislature.

I have worked in the arena of social work licensure in Maryland for twenty years. I served as the Exec. Dir. of the MD Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers from 2005 until my retirement in 2022. After my official retirement from NASW-MD, I served a short stint as the Exec. Dir. of the BSWE. In all those years, I never saw a bill seeking to make major revisions to social work, or any profession, without involvement of the professional association(s) and/or their licensing board. In the case of SB874 it appears that none of the official stakeholders- professional schools, professional associations, nor the licensing board were consulted as the bill was being developed. Personally, I find this very concerning and not in keeping with my previous experience with this body.

It appears that this legislation is being unnecessarily rushed through. As my colleagues and I have examined this bill, we have found a number of issues, which were then shared with the bill sponsors. This was done in an effort to show that there are many problems and to ask that the process be slowed down so the underlying concerns of the sponsor can be identified and we can all work together to address them in a careful and comprehensive way- resulting in a good bill without unintended consequences. I have seen amendments proposed by the sponsor and while I appreciate the effort to make corrections, in some cases they simply raise new concerns.

In closing, I wish to state that I am supportive of Maryland having the best possible Social Work Practice Act and I am sure that is Sen. Washington's goal as well. In my opinion, this bill is not fixable by amendments. Please consider tabling this bill and directing the BSWE to address clearly stated concerns during the interim, in collaboration with the profession. I would be honored to participate in this process so that a clean bill can be presented to you in 2027.

Please vote NO on SB 874.