



February 18, 2026

Testimony for House Health Committee

Re: HB0769 State Board of Social Work Examiners - Conditional License to Practice Social Work - Revisions

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Bagnall and Members of the House Health Committee:

My name is Will Doyle. I am a clinical social worker, Maryland resident, and the Vice President of Housing First at Pathways to Housing DC.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB769, along with several amendments that would strengthen the bill's effectiveness and ensure consistent implementation.

Maryland is currently facing both a mental health workforce shortage and growing demand for behavioral health services. **HB769 offers a practical and evidence-based solution.**

Pathways to Housing DC provides Housing First, behavioral health, and homeless outreach services in Montgomery County and Washington, DC.

As a social worker of nearly 18 years, I have directly observed how the requirement of ASWB exams for social work licensure have negatively impacted social workers and the clients we serve. From March 2020 to September 2023, 85 unlicensed social workers, individuals with a BSW or MSW from accredited social work programs, applied for case manager positions with a single housing program at Pathways to Housing DC. We were unable to consider hiring them due to a prohibition on unlicensed social work. In the midst of a pandemic, when DC had funded over 2,000 permanent housing vouchers, we were unable to expand our services and provide the lifesaving intervention of housing to chronically homeless individuals due to the barrier of ASWB exams. We also had 3 competent and capable employees increase their skills and qualifications by obtaining an MSW degree. However, they became ineligible for their positions due to the prohibition on unlicensed social work when they predictably were unable to pass the ASWB Masters exam. We therefore had to fire them despite their histories of excellent work. Finally, we have had supervisor positions that require masters level social work licensure sit vacant for up to a year due to the incredible shortage of licensed social workers. Chronically homeless and vulnerable individuals were therefore left homeless despite available housing resources. Rather than protecting the public, the ASWB exams served to severely harm the public in these examples by limiting access to services and resources.

The logo for Pathways to Housing DC features a stylized blue key icon with a heart shape inside the keyhole, positioned above the word "Pathways" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. To the right of "Pathways" is the text "to Housing DC" in a lighter blue, serif font.

Pathways to Housing DC

DC has since created an [“Educational Pathway”](#) for their masters level social work licensure. Had this been in place previously, the barriers described above would not have existed and harmed the public so significantly. This Educational Pathway has had an immediate impact on DC’s masters level workforce. In just 72 days, DC has added 246 LGSWs (LMSW-equivalent), increasing its LGSW workforce by 18%. Notably, 58% or 143 of those social workers are Maryland residents. Maryland has an amazing opportunity to bolster its workforce and keep Marylanders working in Maryland by passing HB769. This bill is also needed to counteract the reduction of our LMSW workforce, which decreased by 4% from 2/6/24 to 2/6/26.

To further strengthen the bill and ensure clear, consistent implementation, 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 HB769 and for your continued commitment to building Maryland’s behavioral health workforce. I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Will Doyle, LICSW
College Park, MD, District 21
Vice President of Housing First, Pathways to Housing DC