

**Dear Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the House Health Committee.**

My name is **Veronica Cosby, MSM, MSW**, and I am an unlicensed Master of Social Work **working in a Maryland** public school with over **20 years of experience in social services and education**. I am writing in strong support of **HB0769**.

HB0769 applies only to **LBSW and LMSW license levels** — BSWs and MSWs who have completed their accredited education and met every other requirement but have not yet passed the ASWB exam. It does **not** impact clinical licensure. The ASWB exam remains an option for anyone who chooses to take it. What the bill does is create a second pathway: a conditional license requiring **CSWE-accredited education, Board-approved supervision for the entire duration, and either passing the exam or completing 1,500 hours of verified supervised practice in consultation with a CSWE-accredited institution**. The conditional license is limited to first-time applicants, lasts **12 to 24 months**, and cannot be renewed.

This issue has already been carefully studied. The **Workgroup on Social Worker Requirements for Licensure**, established by the General Assembly, spent years examining these questions. The ASWB's own 2022 data confirmed a **39-point racial gap** in clinical exam pass rates. The **Council on Social Work Education** has called on states to pause exam use, and **NASW has formally opposed the ASWB exams**. At the same time, Maryland urgently needs more behavioral health professionals. HB0769 is a **measured, evidence-informed response** to a documented workforce problem.

I earned my MSW from **Indiana Wesleyan University** in 2019 and have taken the ASWB exam **13 times**, most recently missing by just one and two points. I have invested over **\$5,000** in testing and preparation. Despite this barrier, I continue to serve Maryland students and families who are facing rising needs related to mental health, food insecurity, housing instability, and access to basic resources. I am also licensed as a social worker in **Illinois**, where an alternative pathway exists — demonstrating that competence can be measured through supervised practice without compromising public safety. I am also currently in the process of obtaining my LGSW licensure through the Washington, DC Educational pathway program. The process was very simple. I paid a \$230 application fee, submitted my CSWE transcript, professional references, and applied for a background check. In 30 days, I will be licensed in Washington, DC.

Maryland is experiencing significant shortages of licensed social workers, particularly in schools. Professionals like myself are already doing this work under supervision. HB0769 would allow Maryland to retain experienced, qualified social workers while maintaining strong oversight and accountability.

I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **favorable report on HB0769** and help strengthen Maryland's behavioral health workforce.

Thank you for your time and your continued leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

*Veronica Cosby*

**Veronica Cosby, MSM, MSW, LSW (150.117091)**