

**HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF**



**HB 769 – State Board of Social Work Examiners - Conditional License to Practice
Social Work – Revisions**

**House Health Committee
February 18, 2026**

Health Care for the Homeless supports HB 769, which would require the State Board of Social Work Examiners (BSWE) to issue a conditional license to an applicant who, except for passing a required examination, has otherwise met the appropriate education and experience requirements. Under the bill, such “conditional licensure” can lead to full licensure without an exam requirement.

We must have a response to the racial disparities of the Master’s Level (LMSW) examination, which have kept many people of color out of the social work profession and/or independent practice. Further, allowing otherwise fully qualified social work professionals to obtain a conditional license both helps address the dire shortage of social workers as well as meet the high need of many communities that are currently underserved.

The Data Undeniably Shows a Racial Disparity in the Examination Pass Rates

Maryland's reliance on the ASWB examination for LMSW and LCSW licensure creates systemic barriers that disproportionately exclude qualified applicants, delay workforce entry, and contribute to social workers leaving the state for jurisdictions with more accessible licensure.

In August of 2022, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) released a report confirming what we already knew: the examination pass/fail rates showed stark disparities across race, age, and language.

According to the national data, the pass rates for the clinical examination (with 2+ attempts) across race was: Black: 57%; Hispanic/Latino 77%; White: 91%. This national data broken down by age was: age ranges 18-29: 91% and age ranges 50+: 65%. Also according to national data, the pass rates for the masters exam (with 2+ attempts) broken down by race was: Black: 52%; Hispanic/Latino: 71%; White: 91%.

The latest *Maryland* data shows even more stark data on the pass rates among different races. The Maryland Master's Level (LMSW) Exam (eventual) first-time pass rates include: Black: 51.4%; Hispanic/Latine: 75%; Asian: 85.4%; and White: 90%.

Health Care for the Homeless Supports Creating Additional Pathways to Licensure

This bill is one such additional pathway to licensure than the current system.

The District of Columbia also implemented a model whereby a person can obtain an LGSW with a transcript, criminal background check, and fee. In the DC model, by the first licensure renewal, the applicant must either pass the ASWB Master’s exam or obtain 1500 supervised practice hours. It is a streamlined approach to allow an additional pathway to licensure. The DC model has already proven to close racial disparities, increase the number of social workers, and decrease the workforce shortage:

- There are 18% more LGSWs in DC

- 86% of educational pathway LGSWs identify as Black
- The average age of an educational pathway LGSW is 40

HB 769 is similar to the DC model. Whether the solution is this particular process or a more streamlined process, like DC, we support additional pathways to licensure. In any case, between the proven racial disparities and the significant impact the examination has on the social work workforce shortage, we **must aggressively address the implicit biases and root causes of these data.**

HB 769 Will Help in Eliminating Inequities

This bill would go a long way in correcting an undeniable injustice and eliminating the racial disparities that exist in passage of this problematic examination. We urge a favorable report on HB 769.

Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland's leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We deliver medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, housing support services, and housing for 11,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County.

*Our Vision: Everyone is healthy and has a safe home in a just and respectful community.
Our Mission: We work to end homelessness through racially equitable health care, housing and advocacy in partnership with those of us who have experienced it.*

For more information, visit www.hchmd.org.