

Michael Massey, PhD, MSW, M.Ed., Assistant Professor, Catholic University of America
SB0018: State Board of Social Work Examiners – Provisional License to Practice Social Work -
Revisions
Position: Unfavorable

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

My name is Michael Massey and I am a resident of District 18 and a Professor of Social Work at Catholic University (my testimony reflects my personal views). I am asking you to **vote NO on HB769/SB0018** as amended. Although I previously supported these bills, the recent amendments leave full licensure dependent on ASWB exams, so they do not create a meaningful alternative pathway.

As I stated in my statement to the subcommittee, this bill has become a parody of itself. The point of the bill was to create a safe, non-exam pathway for trained social workers to get their license and demonstrate competence. Opponents of the bill argued that it would create a two-tier license system. With the current amendments, that is now exactly what has happened.

The amended bill is effectually saying that someone who has earned Master's degree, something which very few people do, can now be licensed to practice provisionally. And then, after 1, 2, or maybe 3 years of actual practice with real human beings, under supervision, where they have demonstrated that they can actually work competently and ethically, they still have to go take an exam that, in over forty years, has no evidence to show that it has any relationship to practice. And if they don't pass, **then the actual demonstration of competence over years of practice means nothing**. Their livelihoods and careers are immediately halted. And if they do pass, then within a year or so for many of them, they will need to pay for, prep for, and pass yet another very similar exam to get their independent license. This makes no actual sense and it sets up a lot of people for a lot of harm.

A provisional license that still requires passing the same exam does little to improve workforce stability. With Maryland's 23% retake pass rate, many agencies are unlikely to hire or retain workers whose licensure is time-limited. This means the workforce shortage will remain, and communities will continue waiting for essential services.

The state's Social Work Licensure Workgroup voted 19-4 to remove the exam requirement at the bachelor's and master's levels. The amended bills move away from that consensus and maintain barriers that disproportionately affect candidates of color, applicants with disabilities, and second-career professionals. The well-connected 17% should not be dictating policy for the 83% who do this work every day.

Supporting these bills as written could delay genuine reform for several more years. Despite significant constituent voices opposed to this version, I expect this bill to pass committee since the crossfile did. **Will you commit to enacting true reform for social workers and their communities in 2027?**

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Michael Massey