

Bill: HB769  
Position: Favorable  
Committee: Health Committee  
February 15, 2026

**Favorable Testimony for HB769 – State Board of Social Work Examiners – Conditional License to Practice Social Work - Revisions**

Honorable Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Health Committee,

My name is Coen Doss, and I am a Master of Social Work student at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, and a resident of Legislative District 32. I am writing to voice my **strong support for HB769**, a crucial piece of legislation that will modernize the social work licensure process in Maryland. By allowing multiple pathways to demonstrate competence, this bill addresses deep-seated inequities in our current system and ensures a strong workforce ready to meet the needs of our most vulnerable populations.

The current reliance on a single, standardized test as the sole gateway to licensure has created a significant disparity gap in social work's labor force. Research consistently shows that these exams have disproportionately high failure rates among social workers of color and those for whom English is a second language. HB769 offers a solution by honoring the fact that every individual learns and demonstrates knowledge differently. By creating alternative assessment methods, we can evaluate a candidate's readiness for practice based on a holistic view of their education and skills, rather than their performance on a single high-stakes day. This is not about lowering standards, but about fairly measuring competence.

Furthermore, the current system places an unjust financial burden on aspiring social workers. Candidates are often required to pay hundreds of dollars for study materials, cover exam fees, and exam fees again should they fail the first time. For recent graduates already carrying student loan debt, this creates a barrier to entry that is purely economic, not a measure of their ability to serve their community. HB769 eliminates this financial strain, making the profession accessible to a wider range of dedicated individuals.

Finally, you must consider the context of our profession at the national level. As social work faces challenges to its professional status and funding from the federal government, Maryland must act to strengthen and stabilize our local workforce. By passing HB0769, you send a clear message that Maryland values its social workers, supports equitable paths to entry, and is committed to removing unnecessary hurdles that keep qualified professionals out of the field.

For these reasons, **I urge a favorable report on HB769.**

Thank you for your consideration,

Coen Doss (he/they)  
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Legislative District 32