

3/23/26

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

I am a constituent and Social Worker asking you to **vote NO on HB769 and 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.

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.

There is a practical solution already being proven. Washington, DC's new non-exam, competency-based pathway has expanded its Masters-level workforce by 26% in just four months, and nearly 60% of that growth is coming from Marylanders who could choose to work here but cannot not under our current system. Maryland urgently needs thousands more social workers by 2028, and continuing to rely on the same exams will not meet that need.

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,

Victoria Rodriguez

Victoria Rodriguez, LCSW, LCSW-C