



**RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE**

February, 4, 2025

TO: House Committee on Corporations
State of Rhode Island

Re: Support of House Bill 5158, An Act Relating to Business and Professions, - License Procedure for Social Workers

Dear Committee members:

I am writing as a licensed clinical social worker and social work educator for 25 years. I urge you to support Bill # H5158 regarding permanently removing the LCSW Master's level entry licensing exam. This bill is pivotal to ensuring that social workers from all racial and marginalized groups have an equitable chance to enter the field. After RI removed the exam in 2022, the Association of Social Work Board (ASWB) released demographic data on exam pass rates, showing disproportionate passing rates for marginalized groups. Ensuring that all entry-level social workers have an equitable chance is imperative to the field of social work. Following the lead from Rhode Island, the following States have passed a law to remove the exam requirement: Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Minnesota, Montana, Oregon, and Utah. Also, it is important to note that the following states did NOT have an exam for the entry-level Master's social work license: California, Florida, Louisiana, Michigan, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Virginia, and Wyoming.

Since the exam was removed, the number of new social workers entering the field has increased significantly and statistically. This legislation would ensure we continue to address the inequitable barriers to entry into the profession.

Data on the number of disciplinary actions taken by the RI State is available as public data. A comparative review of the disciplinary actions on social workers taken by the Board from Jan 2020 – June 2022 (before the change in RI) to the period from July 1, 2022 – Dec 31, 2024 (after the change) shows no increase in the number of complaints. This indicates that there is no increased public harm with this change.

Workforce data published on the RI Executive Office of Health & Human Resources dashboard show that the salary of the Master's-level social worker has steadily increased. This data demonstrates that the change in the licensing process has not impacted the starting salaries of entry-level Master's-level social workers in Rhode Island. For these reasons, I strongly support Bill # H5158 and urge its passage as soon as possible. I sincerely thank Rep. Shallcross Smith and the cosponsors Ajello, Casimiro, Fogarty, Nardone, Fellela, Hull, Alzate, Diaz, and Handy.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

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