



RI Department of Health
Three Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5097

TTY: 771
www.health.ri.gov

February 4, 2025

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr., Chair
House Committee on Corporations
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02908

RE: H 5158 – An Act Relating to Businesses and Professions – License Procedure for Social Workers

Dear Chair Solomon:

Please accept this letter regarding H 5158, legislation that would repeal the examination requirement to qualify for a clinical social worker license.

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) is aware of national concerns about disparities in social work exams pass rates for prospective social workers but cautions against the permanent removal of the requirement to pass a social work licensing exam. RIDOH suggests a one or two-year moratorium on the exam requirement until a remedy to address the disparities can be identified and implemented. In general, healthcare professional licensing exams are important because it educates, prepares, tests entry-to-practice competence, licenses, and regulates healthcare professionals. Obtaining a healthcare license is crucial for healthcare professionals to be able to practice ethically and legally. Having a license helps the public identify competent and qualified healthcare professionals and validates the professions, including the social work profession.

In addition, please be informed that this legislation conflicts with the social work compact legislation enacted in 2024 by the General Assembly. Specifically, the social work compact legislature requires “passage of a clinical-category qualifying national exam” or a grandfather clause that would not apply to all current social workers licensed in Rhode Island. The compact also [requires licensure for both master’s level and bachelor’s level social workers](#). Rhode Island currently requires licensure for only master’s level social workers. Many individuals interested in joining the social work compact in Rhode Island would not be able to do so should H 5158 pass.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jerome M. Larkin" followed by a flourish and the word "for".

Jerome M. Larkin, MD
Director

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Corporations
The Honorable Mary Ann Shallcross Smith
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy
