



Consumer Council System of Maine
A Voice for Consumers of Mental Health Services

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Good afternoon, Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and esteemed members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee.

My name is Simonne Maline. I am the Executive Director for the Consumer Council System of Maine (CCSM). I am here today on behalf of the CCSM to testify **in support of LD 1298, “An Act Establishing Alternative Pathways to Social Worker Licensing”**.

The Consumer Council System of Maine is a public instrumentality written into State Statute by the Maine Legislature to serve in an advisory capacity and to provide legislators with guidance and advice regarding the delivery of effective and appropriate adult mental health services from those served by them.

Currently, the path to becoming a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW), or Licensed Social Worker (LSW) in Maine includes passing a standardized test. However, research shows that non-white test takers fail these exams at disproportionately high rates, despite having completed accredited degree programs and fieldwork experiences. This disparity is not due to a lack of ability or commitment, but rather a reflection of systemic discrimination in standardized testing and broader inequities in our educational systems.

These disparities reflect the systems that have historically underserved marginalized communities, including underfunded schools, barriers to higher education, and curriculum that do not reflect diverse perspectives. The licensure exam, often administered only in English and built on culturally specific norms, presents an additional and unnecessary barrier to qualified individuals who are otherwise prepared to serve their communities.

LD 1298 is a vital step toward a more inclusive and equitable licensing process. It aligns with our values as a mental health advocacy organization that believes diversity among service providers is essential to delivering culturally competent care. Maine is a growingly diverse state, and we need social workers who reflect that diversity—who can serve immigrant communities, speak to the needs of racial and ethnic minorities, and bridge cultural gaps in the delivery of care.

In short, LD 1298 is about removing unjust barriers that keep highly qualified individuals from entering the workforce. It offers the Maine State Board of Social Work Licensure the flexibility to recognize alternative demonstrations of knowledge, skill, and readiness for practice.

On behalf of the Consumer Council System of Maine, I urge you to vote **Ought to Pass on LD 1298**. This bill reflects Maine’s commitment to fairness, equity, and a stronger, more inclusive mental health workforce.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Consumer Council System of Maine
A Voice for Consumers of Mental Health Services

Simonne M. Moline

Executive Director
