

My name is Maureen Clancy, I live at 11 Hemlock Hill Rd., Cape Elizabeth ME and I am the Language Access Coordinator at Portland Public Schools Multilingual and Multicultural Center. I am here today to voice my support for LD1990. At Portland Public Schools we serve a population that continues to be more linguistically and culturally diverse, 43% of our students come from homes that speak a language other than English. Our district, our community, and our state needs more social workers and mental health professionals, especially those who speak other languages and better understand cultural differences.

I have spent the last 10 years working with staff who interpret in multiple languages and for whom English is a second, third or fourth language. I have worked with social workers and teachers who are incredibly talented in their area of study, who have passed all their course work from accredited universities, and still struggle to pass the standardized tests that are required for licensure for their field. Standardized tests use very nuanced language to confuse and complicate, and use cultural context that is unfamiliar to many people. I routinely assist staff in understanding cultural context in their daily work and in reviewing their writing to assist with the complexity of the English language.

The standardized test used to license social workers in Maine and in much of the United States is from the Association of Social Work Board (ASWB). In August of 2022 the Final report of the Analysis of ASWB Examination Pass Rates was published. The report highlighted the stark differences in test passage results by gender, age, ethnicity and English as a second language speakers. In fact, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) opposes the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) social work licensing exams after a review of ASWB data shows significant disparities in pass rates for prospective social workers of color, older adults, and those who speak English as a second language. And as stated on their website "NASW is committed to working closely with its partners to propose innovative solutions that reduce harm and increase diversity at all levels of social work practice."

The ASWB is working to make changes to its practices and tests to reduce the disparities in the testing results. Based on their website, the estimation is that these new tests will be ready in late 2026. We as organizations and institutions must take steps to remove racist and or biased practices that limit the ability of many qualified individuals from serving the families in our communities.

With this in mind LD1990 is a sensible measure to ensure that we are not unfairly limiting the ability of people who have successfully completed their degrees in social work, from accredited universities, from working in their career and serving the communities most in need of their care.

Thank you.