

NASW: LD1990/HP1273

Makayla Caisse

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Good afternoon Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and honorable members of the Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments in support of LD1990. As a recent graduate from the University of New England this past May, gaining my Masters in Social Work, my final task was to test for the ASWB licensure exam so that I was able to practice in the state of Maine. But, in order to get there, I had spent countless hours writing papers, gaining research, driving long distances and spending hours at my internships, connecting with real people who were my clients, along with 2 years worth of class time all to question in the end if this field was the right one for me due to the barriers I am going to address.

Unfortunately, as embarrassing as this is for me to admit, I have taken the licensure exam three times since graduating, and with all three I have failed to pass within under 10 points. Missing by 1 point the last time taken. If I had just answered 1 more question correctly, standing in front of you would be another licensed fellow social worker. The experience I have gained throughout my MSW program, I would not take back for the world, but would have chosen differently if I had known the barriers causing me to work in this field. I have colleagues, professors, supervisors, and classmates who would be able to testify on my behalf of the kind of social worker I am, the knowledge I contain, and the skills that are being withheld to help real people in this state. The amount of sadness, anger, and motivation I have from these failed attempts, is the reason I stand before you today to plead for change in how we move forward for social workers.

ASWB has proven to show in many states who are fighting the same issues we are here today for, they lack evidence of the actual pass/fail rates, do not provide assistance to those who have failed multiple attempts, data they recently released that indicates biases for those who are members of historically marginalized groups like Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color, as well as older adults and those with English as a second language. Current costs of the licensure exam, costs and array of study materials that don't correlate to the real exam itself, time spent studying, along with costs of student loans has put a burden not only on myself, but for current students, and future students wanting to pursue social work. We know in Maine there is a mental health crisis and shortage of mental health professionals, so why not change that? In conclusion, we can improve the lives of social workers, and the people in the state of Maine needing access to mental health workers. I urge the board to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD1990.

Thank you,  
Makayla Caisse, MSW.