



Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine
The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers

Malory Otteson Shaughnessy, Executive Director

Testimony in Support of LD 1990

An Act to Improve the Licensing Procedure for Certain Social Workers by Removing the Examination Requirement

Sponsored by Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross

January 25, 2024

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Good afternoon, Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and esteemed members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. My name is Charlotte Warren, and I am here on behalf of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. The Alliance is the statewide association representing the majority of Maine's community-based mental health and substance use treatment providers. The Alliance advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system.

On behalf of the Alliance, I am here today to speak in support of LD 1990 "An Act to Improve the Licensing Procedure for Certain Social Workers by Removing the Examination Requirement" with one suggested amendment. As members of Maine's legislature and specifically, as members of this committee, you don't need me to tell you that Maine is experiencing a severe workforce shortage, especially regarding behavioral health. That is one reason to eliminate the exam, but a more important reason is to eliminate bias.

According to the ASWB website (figure attached), from 2011 to 2021, there were 1,308 first time test takers in Maine with an overall pass rate of 87.6%. However, the pass rates of black Mainers was 50%, and for Native American/Indigenous Mainers the pass rate was 76.9%.

"Nationally, when considering the Clinical exam performance of test-takers by race/ethnicity, first-time pass rates have historically been highest for white test-takers, averaging 83.9 percent during the 2018–2021 time period, followed by multiracial (79.9 percent), Asian (72 percent), Hispanic/Latino (65.1 percent), Native American/Indigenous peoples (62.9 percent), and Black (45 percent) test-takers" (ASWB, 2022).

All social work institutions - including ASWB and licensing boards, NASW and other associations, and social work higher education programs - must openly confront systemic racism within our profession. We must all commit to work to ensure reforms are made to ensure the licensing process is equitable for all, protecting the public without unnecessary gatekeeping and discrimination. It is for these reasons that the Alliance supports removing the testing requirement for LSW, LMSW, and LMSW-CC applicants who can show they have graduated from an accredited social work program. For these applicants, the board would be accepting a degree in place of testing.

However, for LSX candidates applying for their full LSW, the Alliance urges this committee to consider, if eliminating the test for this group of applicants, to replace the exam with another method that certifies a baseline level of knowledge. LSX candidates applying for their full LSW have not graduated from an accredited social work program and the consultation LSX applicants receive can be of varying quality and isn't normed or accredited like a social work education. Furthermore, the Alliance suggests an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds to develop assessment methods that truly reflect the diversity within the social work profession. This collaborative approach will help create a more inclusive and just evaluation system that upholds the values of fairness and equity.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. I urge an ought to pass vote on this bill and am happy to bring any requested information to the work session.



Number of test-takers and first-time pass rates by demographic group 2011 – 2021

State/Province	# test-takers (overall)	Pass rate (overall)	
ME	1,308	87.6%	
Demographic	Group	# test-takers	Pass rate
Race/Ethnicity	Asian	9	
	Black	14	50.0%
	Hispanic/Latino	14	85.7%
	Multiracial	19	94.7%
	Native American/Indigenous peoples	13	76.9%
	White	1,206	88.3%
Gender	Men	195	86.2%
	Women	1,112	87.9%
Age	18 - 29	281	91.1%
	30 - 39	577	89.8%
	40 - 49	266	84.6%
	50 and older	184	79.9%
Language	English	1,286	88.1%
	Non-English	22	59.1%

Note. To protect the privacy of individual test-takers, results are not shown for groups where the number of test-takers is less than 10.

Keep Only Exclude