

Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

Testimony in Support of LD 1990, An Act to Improve the Licensing Procedure for Certain Social Workers by Removing the Examination Requirement

The University of New England's (UNE) School of Social Work submits this testimony in support of LD 1990. As social work educators, we believe that the proposed moratorium on testing will provide the opportunity for all parties to review the current workforce development system and make changes that reinforce quality while opening the door to more aspiring social workers to join the profession. This is sorely needed as more and more Maine people find it difficult to access these critical services.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) sets demanding standards for their accreditation process and students who graduate from CSWE-accredited Master of Social Work (MSW) programs, like UNE's, have demonstrated that they meet all nine of the CSWE competency areas. As educators, we know that students who have graduated from MSW programs have received a rigorous, thoughtful, and comprehensive competency-based education. These competencies encompass ethical and professional behavior, diversity and social justice, critical thinking, and the ability to engage effectively with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. By upholding the CSWE competencies, MSW programs ensure that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to address the complex challenges of our society. These individuals are well-prepared to address the multifaceted needs of diverse populations and contribute positively to the betterment of Maine.

In our experience, a high-stakes test at the end of their education doesn't predict future success. What it does, is block some good candidates from moving forward and making a positive impact in our communities. This is problematic as we are actively trying to address social worker shortages in Maine. We view this as a counterproductive hurdle.

We urge you to consider the importance of LD 1990 in addressing Maine's workforce shortage and to support this legislation.

Dr. Jennifer O'Neil
Director, School of Social Work

Dr. Autumn Straw
Director, Graduate Programs in Social Work

Ed Cervone
University of New England
LD 1990

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