

Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, Attn: Edna Cayford  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
Cross Building, Room 220  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 1990: *An Act to Improve the Licensing Procedure for Certain Social Workers by Removing the Examination Requirement*

Dear Senator Donna Bailey, Representative Anne Perry, and other members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services,

**I am writing in support of LD 1990: *An Act to Improve the Licensing Procedure for Certain Social Workers by Removing the Examination Requirement*.** I have been practicing as a social worker since I graduated with my MSW from the University of Maine, School of Social Work, in 1998, and I have since worked in community agencies, a high school, private practice, and now at my alma mater as an educator. It is from all of these vantage points that I have witnessed the way that the Association of Social Work Board (ASWB) standardized exam has been a harmful barrier in the social work licensing process.

**We have an emergency shortage of social workers in our state.** Through my professional practice and relationships with social service agencies, as well as my personal experience due to the needs of family and friends, I see every day how people in need are going without the mental health support they deserve. We are in a crisis in our state – there aren't enough social workers to care for our community members. *This is resulting in needless suffering, death, and soaring health care costs because of the lack of routine, preventative, responsive mental health care.*

**The licensing exam acts as a cruel and unfair barrier to our students and alumni, especially graduates of color, older adult graduates, and graduates for whom English is not their primary language.** In August 2022, after many years of denying that they had collected the data, ASWB released pass rate information which demonstrated what many had always known – that *the exam is racist, ageist, and xenophobic*. This exam has systematically kept skilled, accomplished social work graduates from accredited Schools of Social Work from getting licensed. This has caused test takers to have to retake the expensive exam, sometimes multiple times (it currently costs \$230 per attempt), and spend an inordinate amount of money on test preparation materials. This has delayed test takers' ability to earn a wage at their educational attainment level to support their families and repay their loans. *It has kept skilled, accomplished social work graduates from serving Maine communities, including communities of color in Maine who need and deserve their abilities and assistance.*

**We can't afford this in Maine.** *This exam has caused harm on many levels, and it continues to do so. Harm to hard working, accomplished and skilled social work school graduates. Harm to communities of color in our state. Harm to the people of our state in need of mental health care.*

**Other states have successfully taken action by removing the exam as a requirement for licensure.** States like Illinois and Rhode Island have eliminated the exam and seen huge benefits – graduates previously blocked by the exam have been able to get licensed, practice safely, and serve the people of their states which has greatly improved care.

**We can take the right step, too, by making the positive choice to put a moratorium on the exam, analyze the impacts, and end a barrier that is hurting the people of our state. I urge you to vote in favor of LD 1990.**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann Hartman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ann Hartman LCSW  
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and

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