

Shemaya Laurel
Gouldsboro
LD 1990

Dear Members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee,
I am writing in support of LD 1990: An Act to Improve the Licensing Procedure for Certain Social Workers by Removing the Examination Requirement.

This bill is important to me for two reasons:

- 1) it will address the shortage of behavioral health providers in the state of Maine
- 2) this bill will improve equity for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community members generally, and specifically in the field of social work

I have experienced being on a waitlist for unavailable clinical support, as have many, many others in this state. It is both demoralizing, and can be dangerous, for the people themselves and for the people in their care. The state of Maine is currently in a crisis on this issue, with nowhere near enough providers to meet the well-documented need. My own experience was many years ago; and still this issue resonates. Many, many people are experiencing this shortage **right now** and there is not much hope in sight. Passing this bill would be a beginning to addressing this shortage of social workers in our state.

Inequity in testing for unnecessary documentation is, furthermore, yet another obstacle to appropriate representation of all of our communities among social work service providers in Maine. Everything from racially/culturally biased test questions to prohibitive costs mean that we are losing qualified social workers, who have graduated from thoroughly accredited programs in our own state universities, because of a requirement that is neither necessary nor appropriate for entry-level professionals.

Please take all of this into account, and vote "ought to pass" on LD 1990 to begin to effectively address both of these issues: Maine's shortage of social workers, and racial equity within the field of social work. Thank you.

Respectfully,
Shemaya Laurel
Gouldsboro, Maine