

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

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

Presented to Maine's Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services.

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine supports the passage of *An Act to Improve the Licensing Procedure for Certain Workers by Removing the Examination Requirement*. As the state's largest grassroots mental health organization, NAMI Maine advocates strongly to work to provide mental health care services to the 1 in 4 Mainers who are diagnosed with a mental health challenge. We also support the reduction of barriers for new members of the workforce joining the profession.

Before the occurrence of COVID-19, Maine was unfortunately recognized nationally as having a critical shortage of mental health providers. Since the onset of the pandemic, the shortage has continued to grow. The Health Resources and Services Administration, as well as Mental Health America, identify Maine as having significant deficits in the mental health workforce at many levels. By providing an alteration to the licensing guidelines, we will be able to welcome many new social workers to the field following the completion of their schooling. Although it is imperative, that we ensure that professionals working with our most vulnerable individuals are appropriately trained and qualified, the testing requirements can place undue financial barriers on those new to the field, as testing is often an out-of-pocket expense, and often results in individuals needing to take either paid or unpaid leave from their employment. Standardized testing has also been proven to create inequities in the passage rates, with BIPOC and individuals from lower socioeconomic status often performing lower than their white, middle-class counterparts. Social work is a profession of humility and connection, with the testing process often conflicting with Social Work Ethics.

NAMI Maine supports the work and initiatives of this committee in ensuring that critical resources and services are provided in the state. The creation of a robust workforce and reducing the barriers to working in a rewarding, although challenging field, will increase the ability to support our communities. Because of this, NAMI Maine supports the passage of LD 1990.

ABOUT NAMI MAINE: *Incorporated in 1984, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maine Chapter (NAMI Maine) is the state's largest grassroots mental health organization. With support from national and regional affiliates, the agency is dedicated to building better lives for everyone impacted by behavioral health concerns. NAMI Maine engages with leaders and community partners at all levels to improve the state's mental health system through collaboration and education.*

LEGISLATIVE CONTACT

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POSITIONS & POLICY AGENDA
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