

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

January 24, 2024

Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333
c/o Edna Cayford, Committee Clerk

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

As a social worker, it certainly gave me pause at first when I heard about removing some of the ASWB social work exam requirements. “Wait, are we just letting anyone practice now? Won’t the quality of the sensitive work we do be diminished as a result and thus put the clients with whom we work in danger?”

Then I realized that, like myself, the Bachelor’s level (LSW) and Master’s level (MSW and LMSW-CC) social workers affected by this bill have to pass and graduate from rigorous accredited undergraduate and graduate programs. I also recalled that the social workers referenced in this bill are required to operate under supervision as they are not LCSWs, aka independently licensed social workers. They are “dependently licensed” if you will. This quelled my primary concerns and allowed me to reflect on some of the unintended consequences with the ASWB exams.

As many of you know, we have a workforce shortage in many areas in the state, but particularly in mental health. The aforementioned ASWB exams present a barrier to the mental health field, especially to those individuals most underrepresented and needed in social work—people of color and those who speak another primary language. The ASWB did an audit on their own exams and found that BIPOC individuals and individuals whose first language was not English are much less likely to pass the examination. (See charts below for a look at some of ASWB’s data on the exams in question for this bill).

As a school social worker who works with a lot of new Mainers, I am hopeful that removing the ASWB exam barriers to some of the entry level social workers would allow for more social workers of color, and social workers that speak some of the languages so desperately needed to serve many of those in the communities with which I work.

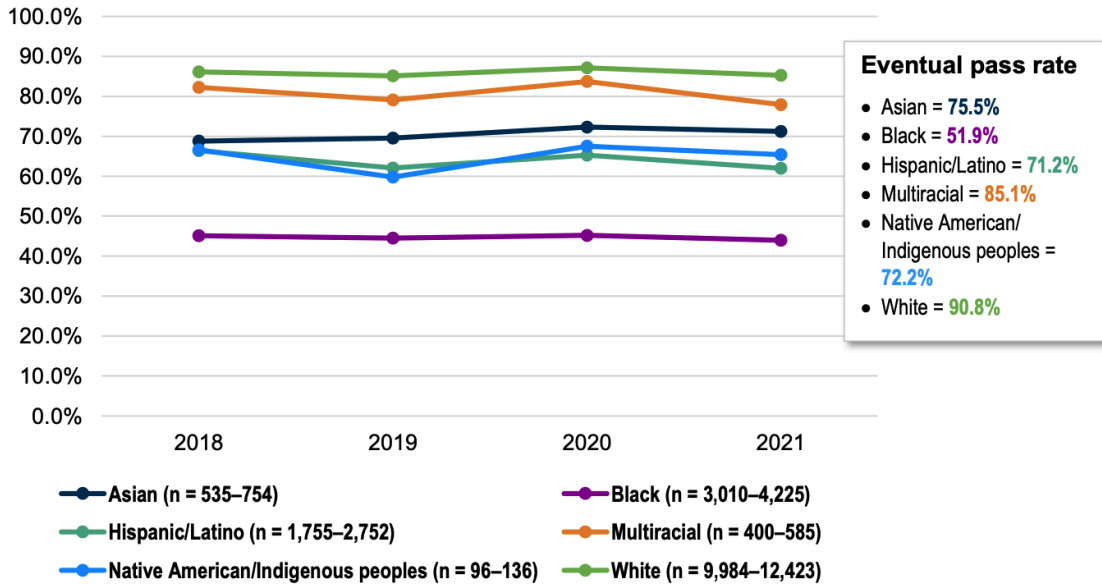
Thank you for your time and consideration in supporting this bill and addressing some of the unintended consequences the current exams have been causing,

Sincerely,

Jeremy Lynch, LCSW
Gorham, ME

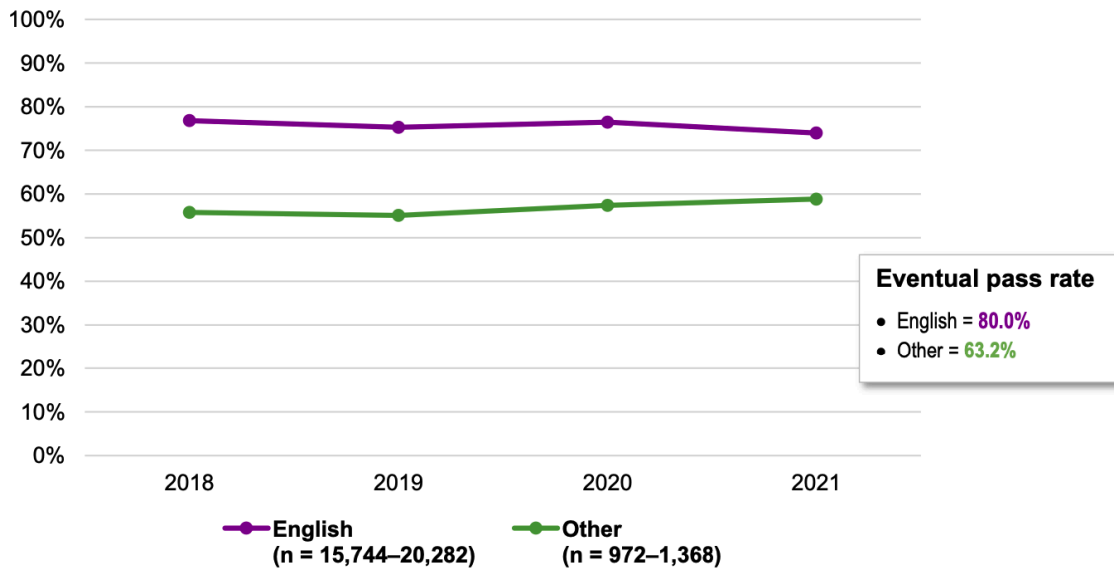
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Figure 9. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity



2022 ASWB Pass Rate Analysis Final Report, p. 25

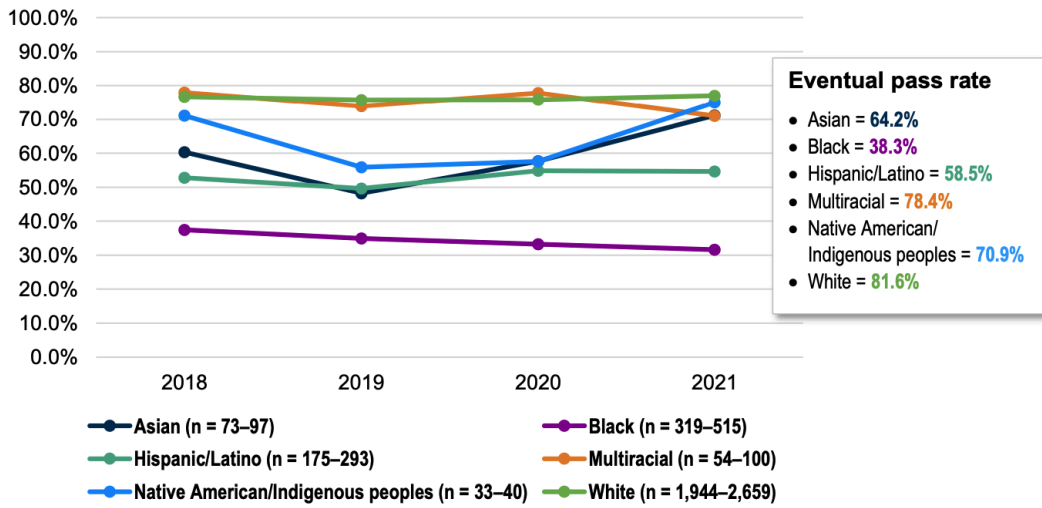
Figure 12. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by primary language



2022 ASWB Pass Rate Analysis Final Report, p. 28

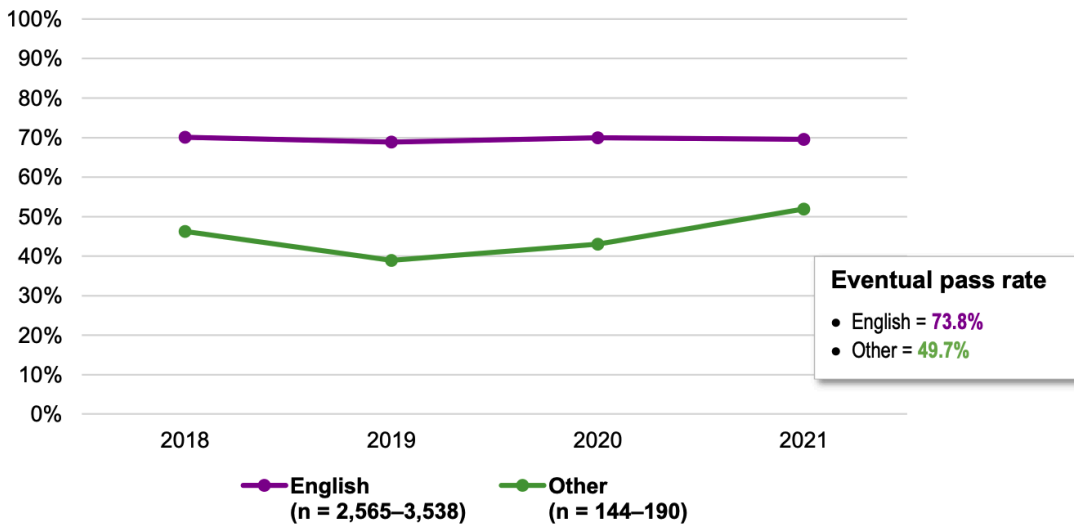
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Figure 16. 2018–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity



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Figure 19. 2018–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by primary language



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2022 ASWB Pass Rate Analysis Final Report:

<https://www.aswb.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2022-ASWB-Exam-Pass-Rate-Analysis.pdf>