



March 3, 2022

House Bill 1130

**State Board of Social Work Examiners – Temporary License to Practice Social Work
House Health and Government Operations Committee**

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) is an association of private child caring organizations providing foster care, group homes, and other services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. The members of MARFY represent providers who serve Maryland's most vulnerable children who are in out of home placements due to abuse, neglect or severe mental health, and medical needs. We operate group homes, treatment foster care programs and independent living programs, primarily serving the foster care population as well as a juvenile services population.

If passed, House Bill 1130 would prohibit the licenses, certificates, permits, and registrations issued by health occupations boards before December 4, 2021 (the date the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) experienced a cybersecurity attack) from expiring and requires such credentials to remain effective until the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) restores the systems and servers of the health occupations boards that were impacted by the cybersecurity attack.

Private providers experienced significant obstacles prior to COVID-19 as it pertained to hiring social workers due to an identified national shortage; and this challenge has become more compounded as a result of the pandemic. The delay in a graduate's ability to obtain their licensure considerably impedes employer's capacity to offer employment subsequently hindering clinical services that our youth, families, and communities require. Due to the current unprecedented hindrances, it took many agencies over 10 months to fill social worker positions in some group homes over the past two-years. Allowing licenses to expire due to the DoIT attack would further exacerbate the prior worker shortages caused by COVID-19.

As worker challenges continue, the state of our current mental health needs as it pertains to caring for our most vulnerable populations far exceeds anything MARFY members have ever witnessed. We strongly advocate for this extension to be considered to help alleviate our existing barriers for the mental well-being and safety of our youth, families, and communities. Allowing this bill to pass would provide an opportunity to continue our efforts in serving our community.

It is for these reasons we politely ask for a favorable report on House Bill 1130.

For more information call or email:

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