

CHRIS WEST  
Legislative District 42  
Baltimore and Carroll Counties

Judicial Proceedings Committee



Annapolis Office  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 322  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3648 · 301-858-3648  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3648  
Chris.West@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
The Maryland State Senate Finance Committee  
The Honorable Pamela Beidle  
3 East Miller Senate Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Re: Senate Bill 794: State Board of Social Work Examiners – Continuing Education Programs – Approval of Authorized Sponsors**

Dear Chaiwoamn Beidle and Members of the Committee,

In order for a Maryland licensed social worker to renew his or her license, the social worker must have completed a required program of 40 continuing education units. This bill deals with the authorized providers of such continuing education.

In the past, there was a process for people to apply to be approved by the *Board of Social Work Examiners* to become a Board Authorized Continuing Education Sponsor. This past process ensured quality control and was affordable for potential sponsors because once vetted, they could then offer workshops without paying an individual fee for every workshop. However, on January 1, 2021, the Board stopped accepting new applications, and thus ended its sponsorship program. In fact, the Board has not approved any authorized sponsors since May 2020.

So, in order to renew his or her license, a social worker must provide evidence that he or she has completed the required continuing education, but the Board is no longer approving persons or organizations to provide the continuing education. Thus, a vacuum currently exists under Maryland law.

While it is possible for local employers to seek approval to provide continuing education from one of only two national organizations, the cost is prohibitive, the approval process is administratively onerous, and the process takes a long time. Further, the approvals last for two years at most, thus requiring the employers to go through the entire process repeatedly at short intervals. I am attaching to my written testimony a sheet detailing the costs and timelines for these approvals. As you can see, they amount to hundreds of dollars.

Senate Bill 794 is a reasonable fix of this problem. It requires the State Board of Social Work Examiners to establish a process to review and approve a person seeking to become an authorized sponsor of continuing education programs for social workers renewing their licenses. This process must include at least one pathway for approval that does not require an applicant to have the approval of a national or regional organization to be approved as an authorized sponsor

and stipulates that the board must create a regulatory framework to ensure oversight of these sponsor certifications.

Senate Bill 794 will save money for employers, will eliminate the need to pay recurring fees to the two national social work organizations, will be time-efficient, will increase the retention of Maryland social workers and most importantly will align with the Board's mandate to protect the public and ensure that Maryland social workers are thoroughly trained.

Let's make it simple and easy for Maryland social workers to obtain their required continuing education credits. The current complicated and expensive system is not in the interests of the citizens of Maryland. This bill will solve the problem.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of Senate Bill 794 and will be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.