



**Board of Education
of Howard County**

Jennifer Swickard Mallo, *Chair*

Yun Lu, Ph.D., *Vice Chair*

Linfeng Chen, Ph.D.

Jacky McCoy

Jolene Mosley

Robyn C. Scates, Esq.

Antonia Watts

Lamia Ayaz
Student Member

William J. Barnes
*Acting Superintendent,
Secretary/Treasurer*

**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,
Finance Committee
March 12, 2024**

SB0794: FAVORABLE

State Board of Social Work Examiners – Continuing Education Programs – Approval of Authorized Sponsors

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **SB0794 State Board of Social Work Examiners – Continuing Education Programs – Approval of Authorized Sponsors** as a cost saving measure to support and retain school system social workers.

SB0794 requires the Maryland State Board of Social Work Examiners (BSWE) to establish a process to review and approve a person seeking to become an authorized sponsor of continuing education programs for social workers renewing a license under § 19–308 of the Health Article. The 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 by the BSWE as an authorized sponsor.

Currently in Maryland, master’s level social workers, including those working for local school systems, are required to accrue 40 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) every two years to maintain their license. CEUs must include a combination of Category I activities and Category II activities. SB0794 addresses Category I CEUs.

Category I activities are live, real-time, interactive events provided by BSWE-approved sponsors. Of the required 40 CEUs, a minimum of 20 must be Category I. Category II activities (which can be no more than 20 CEUs) do not require BSWE approval. Activities such as journal clubs, in-service trainings, and home study courses may be used to satisfy Category II CEUs.

Before May 2019, the BSWE granted approval to organizations, such as local school systems, that met certain criteria. The cost to become a Category I approved sponsor was \$200. This was a one-time fee and once organizations were approved, the approval was permanent. In May 2019, the BSWE stopped approving sponsors of Category I CEUs, and instead delegated this responsibility to the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). The ASWB and NASW processes are difficult, administratively burdensome, time-intensive, and costly (approximately \$1,500) for school systems to become board-approved providers. Additionally, approval by NASW and ASWB lasts for only 1 year (NASW) or 2 years (ASWB), at which time school systems and other organizations are required to pay for and go through the approval process again. SB0794 would require BSWE to approve qualifying applications once again.

The Board supports SB0794 because it would be a more timely, practical, and less expensive way for the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS), and other organizations, to become BSWE-approved sponsors. It can save HCPSS and staff money as the school system is not covering the cost of leave that may result from social workers taking time off to earn Category I CEUs outside of HCPSS, as well as the elimination of recurring ASWB or NASW fees. It also increases retention and enables HCPSS Social Workers to enhance their professional growth by sharing their expertise, while earning required CEUs “in-house.”

For these reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report of SB0794 from this Committee.