

Dear Members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

I am a licensed independent social worker with supervision designation, and I have practiced here in Central Ohio as a licensed social worker since 1995. I am writing to first of all thank Senator Nickie Antonio for sponsoring the amendment to HB 509. Secondly, I want to urge Senators Terry Johnson, Jerry Cirino, Rob McColley, Bill Reineke, Michael Rulli, and Dale Martin to support Senator Antonio's amendment to HB 509 that would remove the section of HB 509 allowing people without degrees in social work to become licensed as a social worker.

As someone who has taught future and current social workers in the College of Social Work at The Ohio State University as an adjunct/community lecture since 2002, I want to testify that the knowledge, values, and skills of the social work profession are unique and distinct from that of other helping professionals including education, sociology, psychology, criminology, nursing, etcetera. With my 27+ years of experience working on multi-disciplinary teams, including here at Nationwide Children's Hospital since 2006, it has been my experience that social workers add a unique perspective to caring for patients and families that is often key to addressing those needs which surgery and medications cannot touch. This is especially true when child protection, family violence, and social determinants of health issues come into play. Social workers are trained to understand how systems impact upon patients'/families' daily lived experiences, and are trained to work in a wholistic way, understanding the impact of the environment on our patients'/families' lives and considering interventions that will improve a given patient's/family's life on multiple levels. Other helping professions do not share this "person-in-environment" perspective in their practice. Having worked closely with other helping professionals in this pediatric medical setting, I feel strongly that my social work perspective and that of my social work colleagues allows us to add to the patient care experience a standard of treatment excellence which supports achieving the best outcomes our patients' caregivers and our hospital seeks. There is already a stigma in this pediatric setting for some patients/families that "social worker" means Child Protective Services worker, and such a stigma I believe would be further deepened by allowing others, who do not have social work degrees, to carry the title of "social work" by being able to receive a license. Social workers play such a key role in our State's safety nets for the most vulnerable amongst us. Having a social work license currently means that the social worker has committed themselves to ethically serving those who are hurting, traumatized, ill, living in poverty, and the young and old in this community. I believe that if we allow others who do not have social work degrees to receive a license, it will threaten the profession of social work itself, and this presents a public protection issue. HB 509, without Senator Antonio's amendment, would also negatively impact Ohio in that it would likely bar our state from joining the interstate licensure compact that is currently in progress.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my testimony in regards to HB 509.

Sincerely,
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She/Her/Hers
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