

December 5, 2022

The Ohio Senate
Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Re: HB 509

Senator Johnson, Senator Cirino, Senator McColley, Senator Reineke, Senator Rulli, Senator Martin, and Senator Antonio,

My name is Alexis Babik and I am a licensed social work supervisor in Ohio. I am writing you all today to express my strong opposition regarding HB 509 and express my support for Senator Antonio's amendment. The proposed change of allowing related fields, other than social work, to obtain a license in social work (LSW) is detrimental to the validity of the social work field and poses a danger to the community. This proposed change would affect Ohioans ability to access reliable mental health care and creates an environment for harm to occur.

To be licensed as an Ohio social worker the requirements include, at minimum, a Bachelor's in Social Work (BSW), 400 documented hours at an internship, and a passing score on the ASWB licensure exam. The degree of social work includes rigorous education regarding evidence-based theories, assessment, practices, interventions, and diagnosing of mental health disorders.

This degree is specifically tailored to how to safely provide mental health therapy to children and adults. Safe mental health therapy includes having the expertise to not re-traumatize a client, completing lethality assessments (including duty to warn), understanding how to diagnose a mental health disorder properly (with supervision), as this becomes part of a client's medical record, and having education on boundaries to minimize the risk of transference and/or countertransference. This is not a complete list but includes some of the most important reasons that first came to my mind.

I strongly believe that a degree in social work is necessary to become a licensed social worker. Not only because of the reasons listed above but also because of the education that is learned on how to care for oneself as a clinician. Social workers are exposed to discussions regarding trauma, death, violence, abuse, substance use, suicide, and grief each day. We have all received education regarding self-care and how to navigate these compiled discussions with hopes to avoid secondary trauma and burnout.

As a Master in this field, I hope you take this testimony into consideration when deciding the future of the social work field.

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AB', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Alexis Babik, MSW, LISW-S