

December 6, 2022

To whom it may concern,

My name is Cody Tatum, and I am a social worker with a Master's degree and a license to practice in Ohio. For the past near-decade, I have worked with child victims of sexual abuse and their families to respond to the investigation and treatment of child abuse in one of its most heinous forms. Through that experience, I have had the privilege to witness firsthand the incredible strength and resilience of children, and impactful our evidence-based interventions are having. These crimes and traumatic experiences are terrible, and they carry with them psychological impacts that last a lifetime.

Our best way to help is to do everything we can to uphold the standards and efficacy of our profession. Child sexual abuse is but one example of the myriad of complex social problems that the field of social work is evolving the interventions of. The crisis we see in social worker workforce are the result of a failure to support the profession of social work, and to hold the professional knowledge and licensure in the same esteem as many other licensed professions. At a time when we face a surge of mental health problems and social justice inequities, diluting the field of social work will only serve to dampen and weaken the interventions and practices that our profession has built and continues to evolve through adherence to standards, evidence-based practice, peer-review, and the other pillars of competent practice. The way forward is to empower the individuals who have devoted their professional lives to the betterment of social work.

Ohio faces an uphill battle nationally to bring its support of social workers to levels similar to state peers. This language would not only impact outcomes for Ohioans, it will weaken your constituent's ability to represent Ohio on a national stage as licensed professional social workers. If we want to strengthen our social work movement, we need to support the structure that the profession itself has cultivated. I am asking you to adopt Senator Antonio's amendment to remove the section of the bill that allows related degrees to be licensed as a social worker.

Please don't allow our movement to backslide at a time when we are needed more than ever to help empower Ohioans to a bright future, regardless of who they are. Thank you very much.

Cody Tatum, MSW LSW