

Testimony of Becky L. Thomas, PhD, MSW, LISW-S, ACSW
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair
April 15, 2023

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

My name is Becky Thomas. I have been a licensed social worker since 2004. I write as an Ohio citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83. SB 83 would be detrimental to any accredited social work program in the state of Ohio. Anyone who goes through a social work program and wants to become a licensed social worker needs to graduate from an accredited program. Social work programs in the United States are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). SB 83 is particularly harmful to social work education as specific coursework related to anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion is a requirement for CSWE Program Accreditation. In order to allow individuals from diverse worlds to come learn about discrimination and how this can impact individuals that social workers work with, higher education must remain a welcome and safe place, so people have the freedom to learn.

Any social worker who wants to sit for the licensure exam must graduate from a CSWE accredited program. Lack of licensure significantly reduces the employment opportunities which lead to reduced income for these individuals. Lack of ability to graduate from an accredited program will result in students leaving our state system to attend schools where they can graduate with the necessary requirements to take the license exam.

Some of the greatest employers who require this licensure are our medical systems in Ohio. There are over 247 health systems in our state. Healthcare is already struggling with securing and maintaining employees including social workers. The loss of ability to graduate from an accredited program will result in loss of significant revenue to all state universities and will also result in lack of available employees for hire in our large clinical settings (Aultman Hospital, Cincinnati Childrens, Cleveland Clinic, Good Samaritan, MetroHealth, Mercy Health, Miami Valley, Nationwide Children's Hospital, OhioHealth, Ohio State University Hospital, Promedica, Summa Health, University Hospital, University of Cincinnati Medical Center, VA Medical Center).

Many professional programs require establishment of a plan that shows how students, faculty and staff are diverse and also how they will ensure this occurs. Any attempt to ban or regulate will impact professional programs with this requirement.

I am requesting that you vote NO on SB 83.

Thank you for your time.

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