



## Budget Testimony before the Ohio Senate Health Committee

May 1, 2025

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and Members of the Senate Health Committee: I am Brian Carnahan, Executive Director of the Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapist Board.

Thank you on behalf of the Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapist Board (CSWMFT Board) for providing me with the opportunity to provide testimony on our State Fiscal Year 26-27 budget request.

### **Overview of Board**

The CSWMFT Board is responsible for protecting Ohioans from unqualified and unethical Counselors, Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists, Art Therapists, and Music Therapists. The Board accomplishes this mission through a 21-member board composed of licensed professionals and public members. The Board Members establish the requirements for minimal competency for entry into five separate but related licensed professions numbering over 47,000 licensees and registrants. The Board is funded through licensure applications fees. It receives no general revenue funds.

The licensees of the Board are an important part of the systems that deliver social services and behavioral healthcare to Ohioans. Board licensees work in a broad range of settings, including schools, hospitals, nursing homes, mental health agencies, and private practice settings.

Based on its statutory authority to grant licenses and registrations, the Board establishes and enforces practice standards and codes of conduct. To ensure qualified people are licensed, the Board works with partner associations to implement high quality exams. Continuing competence is fostered through the continuing education requirements established by the Board. The Board investigates violations of the laws and rules governing the practice of Counseling, Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy, Art Therapy, and Music Therapy. If a licensee or registrant is found to have violated the laws and rules, appropriate action is taken by the Board to address the violation and ensure the public is protected.

A staff of sixteen full-time employees support the Board. All staff provide customer service, assisting both the public, applicants, and current licensees. Inquiries concerning ethics questions and requests for application and renewal assistance consume significant staff time. As the number of licensees has increased over the years, so too has the number and complexity of inquiries fielded by the board.

### **Current Biennium**



In FY 24 and FY 25 (as of 2/3/2025) the Board accomplished the following:

- Issued 10,705 licenses and registrations. This includes students issued trainee registrations. Since 2010, the number of trainee registrations has more than doubled from around 900 in FY2015 to 1900 in FY2025. In the last 10 years, the number of licensees and registrants has increased by over 20%, from around 39,000 licensees and registrants to over 47,000.
- Processed 105,218 service requests, which included license verifications, exam reapprovals, reviews of supervision hours, name changes, and other requests. This is in addition to reviewing license and registration applications and providing customer assistance.
- Board staff, working with partners from the Buckeye Art Therapy Association, the Association of Ohio Music Therapists, and other stakeholders, to establish the new art therapy and music therapy licenses.
- Worked with DAS/OIT staff to implement changes to the supervision hour submission process in eLicense. This change will generate processing efficiencies which help licensees.

In FY25, based on complaints received as of April 21, 2025, CSWMFT is on track to open 400 cases resulting from over 1500 complaints. Complaints have grown in recent years. We think the online complaint form available as part of the eLicense system has expanded access to the complaint process, largely driving the growth in complaints. Not all complaints result in the opening of a case as the Board may not have authority to investigate; the complaint may be about a professional licensed by another Board; or the complainant is non-responsive to follow up by the Board. Complaints and resulting cases in FY 2021 through FY 2024 have been on an upward trend, as shown below (the complaints are noted first, followed by the cases opened):

2024: 1143 /473

2023: 1115/532

2022: 928/544

2021: 730/446

The Board is committed to reviewing and investigating complaints, while also working closely with licensees and stakeholders to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and training to avoid violations. The Board has enhanced its complaint triage standard and used technology-related solutions to process complaints as efficiently as possible. However, there is no substitute for an experienced investigator.

### **FY26 and FY27 Biennium**

The Board will focus on the following goals in the next biennium:

- Maintain efficient operations to continue to meet its core mission
- Completing the implementation of the Counseling Compact. This will involve some costs to the Board to modify the eLicense system. Costs for implementation are anticipated during the 26-27 biennium. While working on the Counseling Compact, we will also be actively participating in the development of the Social Work Compact.



- Identifying additional changes to license applications and enhancements to the eLicense system to decrease processing time so that applicants can get to work as quickly as possible.
- Increasing outreach to licensees through the Board newsletter as well as hosting regular online “office hours”, as well as enhancing the training videos and resources offered on its website.
- Monitoring the growth in license applications, service requests, and complaints to determine if resources are allocated as effectively as possible.
- Following up on proposals that emerge from a February 2025 summit with educators. This will be the second time in recent years the Board has gathered Ohio-based educators to discuss how we can work together to get students into the workforce as quickly as possible.

### **Recommended Budget**

In the 2026-2027 biennium, the Board’s proposed budget reflects the projected costs related to personnel, IT, and other operating charges. Personnel, IT and rent comprise around 90% of the Board’s annual expenditure. The Board will continue to leverage technology and identify additional efficiencies to limit other costs.

The Board’s revenues result from licensing and renewal fees. The revenue is sufficient to cover the operating costs requested in this budget.

The proposed budget recommends funding of \$2,161,054 in fiscal year 2026 and funding of \$2,291,375 in fiscal year 2027. The proposed funding for this biennium will allow the Board to meet its mission.

Thank you, Chairman Huffman and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony. I look forward to addressing your questions regarding the Board’s critical public protection role.