

Bethany Barney
1272 Weybridge Rd
Columbus, OH 43220

12/6/2022

Re: HB 509

Senate Workforce and High Education Committee,

My name is Bethany Barney, and as a licensed social worker with both a bachelor's degree and master's degree in social work, I can confidently say that House Bill 509, as it stands, is a public safety issue.

Please understand my motivation: I am not a lobbyist, nor am I representing an association or Board.

If this bill passes, I have nothing to lose monetarily. As you may already know, social workers are paid significantly below the average for those holding master's degrees, so this is not a plea for protectionism. That is not why I am writing. Rather this is a cry for mercy on behalf of those citizens whom social workers serve who could be harmed by the short-sighted nature of this legislation.

In my 20 years as a social worker, I have worked with children, teenagers, parents, trafficking survivors, those seeking mental health assistance and aging adults in nursing homes across the state. Had I been able to obtain a license without having the requisite education and additional training currently required to become a social worker, I would have not been able to work effectively with those clients, and I may have easily caused irreversible damage to them by attempting to provide services without adequate professional training.

As a student at Ohio University, my bachelor's degree involved specific training in social work, statistics, biological sciences, policy, human behavior, social work practice theory, and research, as well as the study of sociology and psychology.

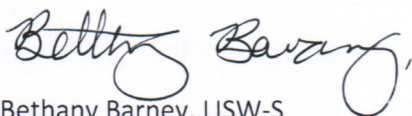
But importantly, as a licensed Social Worker, my training required over 400 hours of field placement which is absolutely necessary to gain real-life experience. Without this specific educational training, I would never have gained the understanding required to do the work that I do now.

It is a sad reality that people sometimes labor under the misunderstanding that a social worker's main job is to disrupt families. The one single thing that often changes their perspective is when they learn that social workers have specialized training and education to specifically aid and assist them in various ways. If other degrees are allowed to be licensed in this way, it will further erode the public perception that social workers are not trained professionals.

Part of House Bill 509 is to ensure a balance between consumer protections and reasonable requirements. I implore you to give consumer protections precedence when considering any changes.

I strongly request that the amendment introduced by Senator Nickie Antonio be adopted as a protection issue, not to protect my profession, but for the safety of those in need.

I appreciate your time and consideration in this matter,

 LISW-S

Bethany Barney, LISW-S