

December 7, 2022

The Ohio Senate
Workforce & Higher Education Committee
Re: HB 509, line 12858 regarding social work title protection

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Martin, and committee members,

My name is Hannah Ware. I am a licensed social worker and Development Associate for the Ohio Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the committee on behalf of NASW again. Our association testified last week to express our strong opposition to the proposed changes to social work licensing in HB 509. We are here today to implore you to pass Senator Antonio's amendment to remove this section of HB 509.

The proposed additional language would end title and practice protection for social workers in Ohio. Currently, to have a license in social work you must have a degree in social work. The public could no longer trust that a "licensed social worker" is actually someone with a degree in social work, eroding our professional standing and reputation. As we said last week, we do not oppose people without degrees in social work from becoming licensed under a different title. We are opposed to non-social workers being called social workers and given that scope of practice.

I want to highlight that if HB 509 becomes law with this language intact Ohio will not be able to enter the interstate compact. If the goal of this bill is to make it easier to work in Ohio than you are accomplishing the opposite. The interstate compact is essential for social workers in Ohio and in other states that serve Ohioans via telehealth. Furthermore, we are concerned that insurance reimbursement will cease for social workers if we are not able to guarantee standardization of competency. As social workers provide the vast majority of mental health services in the state of Ohio, if that were to happen, the impact on the wellbeing of Ohioans would be catastrophic.

NASW would be happy to work with any legislator who wants to identify solutions for the workforce and licensure to find ways to address the intention of this bill. But the language for social workers in HB 509 has drastic unintended consequences for our profession. We ask that you please support social workers to continue to be able to serve the public in Ohio.

Hannah Ware, LSW

Social Worker, Development Associate
National Association of Social Workers- Ohio Chapter
hware.naswoh@socialworkers.org
614.461.4484

