

December 6, 2022

Greetings. My name is Jane Van Coney and I am a Licensed Social Worker. I am a graduate of the Social Work program (BSW) at Mount St. Joseph University, located in Cincinnati, Ohio. I also hold a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from Indiana University (Bloomington IN) and a Master's Degree in Community Health Planning and Administration from The University of Cincinnati. I am a member of the National Association of Social Workers and have a specialty certificate in Social Work Case Management. I would like to share my reasons for not supporting HB 509. I am also requesting that the committee adopt Senator Antonio's amendment to remove the section of the bill that allows related degrees to be licensed as a social worker.

"Social Work" is a profession that requires extensive education in how to specifically address social problems. A Social Work education involves learning about ethics and boundaries, legal issues in serving the public, socioeconomics, group and individual counseling techniques, strategies for addressing mental illness, substance abuse, racism and social inequality. My Sociology degree gave me a good background in social issues, but without my degree in Social Work I would be without the practical and theoretical knowledge involved in trying to actually help alleviate social problems. As a student, I served two practicums which gave me real-world experience working with refugees from a variety of countries in conflict, and working in a long-term care center for adults with disabilities.

Many people work (or want to work) for social service agencies without formal training in Social Work. There is a place for these people, and we need more of them. However, they are NOT Social Workers and should not be referred to or licensed as such. I have worked in senior services, health care, and am now employed as a Social Worker for individuals with physical and mental disabilities. There is a lot to know. While my other degrees and work experience certainly broadened my knowledge base, they did not qualify me as a Social Worker.

There is a perception that Social Workers are merely "do-gooders" who "just want to help people." We certainly DO want to help people, but we DON'T want to harm them inadvertently due to lack knowledge of their conditions, issues, family dynamics, social environment, and ethical/boundary issues.

As a Bachelor's level Social Worker, there are things I am not qualified to do. I cannot work independently as a mental health therapist, and with good reason. I don't have the specialized knowledge of mental illness and medications that a Master's level Social Worker does.

My Social Work education at Mount St. Joseph University (formerly The College of Mount St. Joseph) prepared me well for my current career and I would not be able to adequately serve my clients without it.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Jane Van Coney LSW, C-SWCM