

December 6, 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,

I am a licensed independent social worker, who holds both bachelor and master degrees in social work. I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed changes to social work licensing in HB 509. I am asking you to oppose the proposed language listed on line 12858 that reads: "A baccalaureate degree in social work or another field acceptable to the board." I am grateful to Senator Antonio's office for working to draft an amendment to the bill to do so and I ask that you support her amendment.

This is a public protection issue and could result in serious harm to vulnerable community members. This proposed change would devalue the social work profession by eroding our professional education, values, practice standards, and reputation. The National Association of Social Workers stated "Social work is a specific profession with regulated standards for education, field practicums, and licensure. A degree from a related field likely carries no requirements for an internship meaning that an LSW could have no practical experience before becoming licensed. Furthermore, it devalues and disincentives earning a social work degree as a baccalaureate program requires 400 hours of field education and a master program requires 900 hours."

As a licensed independent social worker, I have firsthand experience on the importance of having both a social work degree and the license that comes with it. Myself and other social workers have worked very hard to obtain the right to call ourselves social workers through receiving both our degree and licensure in social work. Allowing individuals with a degree in any field other than social work will not be beneficial, but rather harmful to the vulnerable populations social workers often serve. In the same way that individuals who become doctors must attend medical school and go through their licensure process to become physicians, the same is necessary for the social work profession.

I know there is a shortage of individuals, like social workers, in the helping field, but I assure you this change to the bill is not the solution. The training and internships I received while obtaining both my undergraduate and graduate degrees in social work are what ultimately prepared me for my career as a social worker and this experience is not comparable to any other related field.

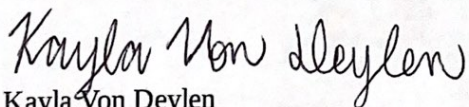
The National Association of Social Workers also stated "It is critical to note that the LSW in Ohio has a significant scope of practice with the ability to diagnose and assess mental health disorders

under supervision. If the amendment is not adopted, Ohio faces a future where someone who has no training in mental health is able to diagnose under supervision which could result in serious harm to people experiencing mental health struggles.”

I am currently practicing as a school social worker in a rural district and I have seen firsthand the difference in training and the tools needed to serve individuals who have experienced trauma between myself as a social worker and a colleague who has a bachelor's degree in Psychology. The two degrees are not comparable, social work is social work. You cannot mold a person with a psychology degree or any other degree into a social worker simply by allowing them to sit for a licensure exam.

The difference in trauma-informed knowledge between myself and my colleague has been very noticeable while discussing students' behaviors, as the colleague does not have the tools needed to see these behaviors through a trauma-informed lens which is critical to providing the best care possible for the individuals we as social workers serve. The vulnerable populations social workers serve are ultimately who will lose if Senator Antonio's amendment to the bill is not adopted. This will happen if individuals who do not receive the training needed through obtaining a social work degree are given the opportunity to become licensed social workers.

Thank you for your time in reading my testimony. I truly hope you will oppose the change to HB 509 listed on line 12858, by supporting Senator Antonio's amendment to the bill. Myself, other social workers, and the individuals we all serve are counting on you and your colleagues to support us in this fight.



Kayla Von Deylen

Licensed Independent Social Worker

kayla.vondeylen@gmail.com

419-274-4907