December 5, 2022

The Ohio Senate
Workforce & Higher Education Committee
Re: HB 509, amendment proposal to line12858 regarding social work protection

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

I am writing to request the committee adopt the amendment to HB 509 proposed by Senator Antonio, which will remove the section of the bill that allows related degrees to be licensed as a social worker. As a licensed social worker who has worked in the profession for ten years, I believe it will be detrimental to the populations we serve, as well as the profession of social work itself, for other professions to be permitted to be licensed in the field.

Social Work is a profession that is guided by its own set of professional standards, values and ethics. Social workers who are currently licensed in the state spend, at minimum, four years and 400 field hours learning about the profession and working to become competent in the educational standards central to it. Allowing other professions that have not had this essential training to become licensed social workers poses a public protection issue. It would devalue the profession as untrained individuals with no qualifying experience or education in the field would now be able to call themselves and practice as social workers.

Furthermore, opening up the social worker license to other professions could negatively impact Ohio's ability to join the interstate compact in social work, which would allow licensed members of the profession to practice across participating state lines. Opening up the license to other professions that are not social work would likely disqualify Ohio from being able to participate as the state would be out of compliance with model regulation standards.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and once again request that you adopt the amendment proposed by Senator Antonio, thereby protecting the social work profession in Ohio.

Sincerely,
Megan Bettelon, MSW, LSW
Social Worker
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