



STATE OF MARYLAND

**DHMH**

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor - Joshua M. Sharfstein, MD, Secretary

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**MARYLAND BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS**

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September 15, 2013

The Honorable Joan Carter Conway  
Chair, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis MD 21401-1991

The Honorable Peter A. Hammen  
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee  
241 House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis MD 21041-1991

RE: State Government Article §8-403 – 2012 Senate Bill 95 - State Board of Social Work Examiners-Sunset Extension and Program Evaluation

Dear Chairperson Conway and Chairperson Hammen:

Pursuant to State Government Article, Section 8-403, the State Board of Social Work Examiners submits this report around three areas requiring analysis and updated information. This report includes:

- (1) an analysis of licensing trends for the licensed social work associate (LSWA) license and options for increasing the number of individuals seeking that level of licensure;
- (2) an update on licensing fees, including a long-term financial plan to ensure a sufficient fund balance; and
- (3) an update on the board's disciplinary process, including outreach efforts and efforts to meet Managing for Results goals."

## **(1). Analysis of Licensing Trends for the Licensed Social Work Associate**

It appears that there are several factors influencing the decision by the Bachelor Degree Social Worker (BSW) after graduation to not sit for the Bachelor Examination and become a Licensed Social Work Associate (LSWA) in Maryland. These factors may also be reflected in other states depending on their licensure and supervision requirements.

### **A. Availability of Employment –**

The non-profit agencies and organizations are a major employer of Bachelor Degree Social Workers since they fill entry level social work positions within their organizations. The bachelor degree is required but not necessarily a BSW license. Case management services are provided and the BSW is supervised which meets the needs and goals of these agencies and organizations.

However, many job opportunities require a professional clinical social worker with a master's degree to perform the specialized job duties such as those outlined by these Departments within Maryland State Government: Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Human Resources, and Department of Juvenile Services

According to the State of Maryland Job Openings, Regular Ongoing Recruitments, the following job classifications are listed as open and continuous:

Social Worker I and II, Health Services  
Social Worker I and II, Family Services  
Social Worker I and II, Criminal Justice Services

All jobs require a Master's Degree in Social Work and licensed at the following levels:  
Licensed Graduate Social Worker or  
Licensed Certified Social Worker or  
Licensed Certified Social Worker – Clinical

### **B. Data Collection Findings –**

The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) administers the Social Worker examinations nationwide. According to their staff, in 2012, 3,200 BSW exams were administered including first time takers and 700 repeaters. The Council on Social Work Education provided them with the 2012 accredited schools graduation rates: approximately 14,000 BSW/year and 20,000 MSW/year. This data show that 23% of the graduating BSWs nationwide go on to take the licensing exam whereby supporting the statements in this Report. In 2012 in Maryland, 56 BSWs took the licensing examination and 32 or 57% passed.

In addition, the following table provides data collected from Salisbury University outlining the total number of BSW graduates and the number and percentage of BSW graduates that took the BSW licensing exam.

Year	# of BSW Graduates	# of BSW Students Taking Licensing Exam	% of BSW Graduates Taking Licensing Exam
2007	61	16	25.2%
2008	68	17	25%
2009	78	4	5.1%
2010	67	11	16.4%
2011	80	11	13.8%

### C. MSW Advanced Standing - Accelerated Master's Level Program –

There is also an accelerated MSW degreed program approved by the Council on Social Work Education (the accrediting body for social work educational programs in the United States) whereby a Bachelor Degree Social Worker can continue their education and receive a Master's Degree within a shorter time frame. This incentive allows the BSW to enroll and complete the master's degree requirements more quickly and graduate with a Master's Degree in Social Work.

The University of Maryland School of Social Work states on their website that they "offer a one-year Advanced Standing program (36 credits) for students entering with a BSW from an accredited program. Students will typically take 30 credits during the fall and spring semesters and the other 6 credits in either the summer before or the summer after their enrollment in Advanced Field Placement. The Advanced Standing program may be taken on an extended basis but must be completed in no more than two years".

### D. Financial Component –

It has been mentioned that the application fee for the BSW examination through the ASWB and the application and licensing fees through the Board are additional factors when a new graduate is coming out with a Bachelor's Degree looking for employment. Instead of applying, the graduate enrolls in the advanced standing program, graduates, and then sits for the Master's exam.

After reviewing information from various educational institutions, state employers, and local non-profit agencies related to the licensed social work associate license and options for increasing the number of individuals seeking that level of licensure, the Board has determined that this is not an area that requires further study or changes to the current licensing system.

## **(2) Licensing Fees and Fund Balance**

As a special funded entity, the Board must entirely fund its operations with fees related to licensure and certification. The Board sets its fees schedule through regulation, with approval from the Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review Committee. Since updating the fee schedule may be a lengthy process, the Board needs to carry a fund



balance to cover inflation and unexpected expenses, such as the cost of a complex legal case or a new legislative mandate, e.g. criminal background checks for all new applicants. All boards, in accordance with the *1998 Joint Chairmen's Report*, established fund balance targets in the range of 20 to 30 percent, based on the size of their operating budget. The targeted fund balance for the Board is 20%.

Listed below is a table showing the actual fund balance for FY 2012 and 2013 and the projected fund balance for FY 2014.

Fiscal Year	Carry Over Beginning Balance	Collections	Expenditures	Carry Over Ending Balance	Carry Over Percent
2012	263,798	1,309,216	1,297,573	275,441	21.23%
2013	275,441	1,426,760	1,397,414	304,787	21.81%
2014	304,787	1,318,600	1,492,816	130,571	8.75%

The long-term financial plan is based on the above assumptions and projections. This data demonstrates the need for the Board to increase fees during FY 2014.

It has been the Board's policy to prevent frequent fee increases by setting its fees high enough to offset the effects of inflation in the out-years. This will result in the Board having a higher fund balance just after the fee increase and which will then be spent down in the out-years.

**(3) The Board's Disciplinary Process**

In an effort to streamline the complaint process, the investigative unit and compliance unit have recently been combined. In the reorganization, the Board was able to provide more clerical support to the investigator thus freeing up the investigator's time to work directly on the active complaint cases. The Board will be monitoring its complaint completion goals via State Stats.

The current complaint database and the information it collects has been reviewed and analyzed. Staff discussed the data fields that are required to track and monitor all complaints received plus the ability to include a notes section for updates. A newly created database will begin operation in September 2013 streamlining the key data fields and capturing the status of the complaint in the overall process. It will be linked to the current complaint database since there are open cases plus on occasion more than one complaint may be filed on the same licensee whereby the past history from the database is necessary.

There are currently 13,381 licensed social workers in Maryland working for public and private agencies, local and State government, education system, public and private long term care facilities and other organizations. The Board realizes the importance of providing information on the complaint process to Maryland consumers through the use of various

media. Right now the Board's website has a separate tab for Complaints whereby individuals and fellow licensees can view posted information and instructions on the process to file a complaint. Second, this website has a separate tab for License Verification which provides consumers and licensees on-line license verification using the licensed social worker's last name or license number. Third, this website has a Disciplinary Actions tab that lists the Board's Public Orders for licensees from 2005 to the present depending on the violations incurred by the licensee.

The newly created Planning and Continuing Education Unit will be developing additional means to reach out to the public. The Board staff has met with the Association of Social Work Boards and the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter, and plans to meet with other partners with a focus on organizations that hire licensed social workers providing services to the communities in the areas of aging, social services, long term care and disabilities. The Consumer's Guide to Health Occupation Boards and Commissions and The Maryland Health Occupations Boards and Commissions Disciplinary Process brochures have been updated and will be distributed to public locations as part of the Board's outreach activities.

Board staff have partnered with the Maryland Schools of Social Work, DC Schools of Social Work, and the DC and VA Boards of Social Work including presentations to social work students around the Board's role and function, licensure, the disciplinary process and how to file a complaint, and continuing education requirements. Presentations have also been made at several NSAW-MD workshops on Supervision.

Thank you for the opportunity to update you on three important issues that impact the social work licensees in Maryland. If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Mr. James T. Merrow at (410) 764-4722 or [james.merrow@maryland.gov](mailto:james.merrow@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,

  
Judy Levy  
Board Chair

Cc: Honorable Thomas V. Miller, Jr., President of the Senate  
Honorable Michael E. Busch, Speaker of the House  
Marie I. Grant, Director, Office of Governmental Affairs  
Ari Elbaum, Assistant Attorney General  
James T. Merrow, Executive Director  
Kristen Neville, Legislation Coordinator