

March 29, 2018

Health and Human Service Finance Committee

RE: HF4192 Social Work Fees Increase
Chair: Representative Matt Dean
200 State Office Building

Dear Honorable Committee Members:

We are writing to express our opposition of HF4192.

We oppose the increase of social work licensure fees for several reasons.

Item 1: Many social workers come from disenfranchised communities who already face barriers to better paying jobs. An example of this is a new immigrant who chooses to become a social worker because there is a paucity of social workers who have the language and cultural skills to work with their community. This means that this individual likely came from a family and social background of poverty due to the structural barriers that relegated individuals from these backgrounds into lower paying jobs. Licensing fee hikes makes it harder for these individuals to climb out of this cycle of economic struggle.

Item 2: Social workers seeking a licensure level of LICSW are required to pay for 200 hours of individual supervision. These hours are contracted with private clinical supervisors who may charge anywhere between \$50 to \$100 per hour. That means that a social worker licensee must pay between \$10,000 to \$20,000 over two years before they can practice independently. An entry level social worker needing clinical supervision may earn anywhere between \$35,000 to \$48,000. That means that a social worker licensee must pay between 1/6 to 1/4 of their personal income before taxes per year to complete their supervision hours. After having paid up to \$20,000 for their supervision, a social worker must then pay the ASWB Exam Fee, in addition to the Minnesota Board of Social Work State Licensing fee of \$238.50 to be licensed. There must be concessions made in order to make this process easier and more affordable for new social workers. Social work as a profession faces shortages in workers, especially workers from the communities who are consumers themselves. Increasing licensing fees only makes it more difficult for new social workers to enter the field, which then prevents them from helping the neediest sectors of our community.

Item 3: Social Work is not a high paying profession. According to the State of Minnesota, Employment and Economic Development Labor Market data from 2018, social workers in a variety of specialties (school social work, chemical health, mental health, healthcare) earn between \$35,000 to \$53,000 a year in the Twin Cities Metro Area, yet the cost to become a social worker is overwhelmingly high as evidenced in item 2.

Item 4: It is shocking that the Minnesota Board of Social Worker is fully funded through licensure fees. Social worker trainees are being asked to pay 1/6 to 1/4 of their personal income per year to be monitored, along with the \$238 every other year currently for LICSW social workers. This will be going up to \$310 if this bill is approved, which does not feel like a big increase, but for a social worker who already earns relatively smaller income compared to those with the same amount of education, \$310 can feel like a large chunk of money out of one's monthly budget. We ask that the State of Minnesota contribute funds to support the Minnesota Board of Social Work rather than asking licensees to provide 100% of this funding.

In addition to the above-mentioned items, it is important to emphasize the inestimable services social workers provide communities. Services in child protection, mental health, hospitals, schools, and several other types of facilities are provided by social workers. Their contributions are manifested through the person struggling with mental illness finding a measure of stability, the person struggling with alcohol abuse finding a way to manage his use, the abused mother and child finding a sanctuary for their safety, the homeless person finding a way to secure housing, and endless other people receiving needed services. Surely it is reasonable for the state of Minnesota to keep licensure fees as low as possible to support the vital services provided by social workers.

Sincerely,

Members of the St. Catherine University - University of St. Thomas School of Social Work