

April 1, 2024

State of Colorado House Health & Human Services Committee
Colorado Assembly
200 E. Colfax
Denver, CO

Dear State Representatives,

I am a social worker in Montrose, Colorado writing in support of SB 24-115 and I have one suggestion.

I support removing the requirement for someone who has completed a Master in Social Work accredited program to also take and pass the National Board of Social Work Exam. Social Workers have graduated from accredited programs and the State of Colorado should trust that these programs are equipping them to receive the accreditation of social worker candidates (SWC). Social work can be a low-paying field and the National Exams can be a costly barrier to further career advancement. Some social workers may choose not to or need a certification beyond (SWC) for their current occupations or career paths. The state board of social work examiners could require continuing education requirements for social worker candidates if they renew past the original 4-year time frame.

I also support removing the requirement of explaining to our clients the levels of each mental health professional and the differences in licensure. In the interest of paper and time, I envision explaining my profession, licensure, and registration.

Sincerely,

Holly L. Speaks

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House Health & Human Services

04/02/2024 Upon Adjournment

SB24-115 Mental Health Professionals Practice Requirements

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Charles Grandmaison For themselves	This bill should include the words on discovering the signs of those who contemplate killing one or hundreds in crowds and or on public and private lands, institutions, gatherings etc. The signs are there and they should be very skillful at spotting these signs of these that would do such hanouse crimes. They should even go as far as having dogs trained with these specialists to smell out the criminal mind, as there feromes are very clear to these dogs. This will stop many hundreds of lives and even drugs that induce bad acts of crime.
Glendy Calderon For themselves	<p>Honorable Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee,</p> <p>I write to you today as a constituent of House District 5 and Senate District 34, I have resided in my districts for two and a half years, the entirety of the time I have resided in the state of Colorado. I am a practitioner of Social Work at the Masters level, I am an unlicensed individual and I am fully invested in the positive applications of this bill for myself and other fellow MSWs.</p> <p>Currently the process for licensure in Social Work, to be recognized with the title of Social Worker, a graduate of Master in Social Worker must complete a Master's program from an accredited institution, then sign up and pass the board of social work examiners' masters examination. Despite demonstrating competencies during graduate school to obtain the skills, knowledge and abilities through (primarily) unpaid internships, coursework, thesis, and supervision, the initial licensure exam presents an additional step that for many is a financial and systemic burden to practicing as a recognized Social Worker and earning the additional clinical license. The advanced clinical license already requires additional supervision from a clinical Social Worker, theory learning, and yet another exam. In addition to all these facts, there is little to no evidence suggesting that the initial Master's level Social Work exam is tied to improved social work practice or outcomes among those served by MSWs.</p>

	<p>Passing SB 24-115 as is, would make the field and services of social work more accessible to all, services which span many industries including education, mental health, homeless services, finance, healthcare and more. I urge you to vote in favor of passing SB 24-115 text of the law unamended, the fiscal note might benefit from further appropriations due to the additional duties of creating new rules, educating the field and implementing SB 24-115. In regards to the latter I urge you to connect with key DORA personnel, the agency identified in the fiscal note as the one leading rulemaking and administration, to ensure appropriations are sufficient. I appreciate your careful review of my position, the time you have spent considering SB 24-115, and the work you carry out for positive livelihoods of your constituents.</p> <p>Respectfully,</p> <p>Glendy Belle Calderon</p>
<p>Trevor Gates-Crandall Against themselves</p>	<p>Representative Daugherty and Distinguished Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:</p> <p>My name is Trevor Gates-Crandall, PhD, LCSW and I live and work in Pueblo. I am writing to oppose Senate Bill 24-115.</p> <p>I hold an independent clinical social work license in Colorado and specialize in mental health practice with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer+ individuals, as well as other people who have been racialized and marginalized. With about two decades of experience in clinical social work in diverse settings, I have also served as a faculty member in social work education at the MSW level and trained as a question writer for the social work licensing exams.</p> <p>Having been deeply involved in the exam development program, I can attest that the processes followed by the Association of Social Work Boards to ensure competence are robust. Each question undergoes multiple vettings by trained, practicing social workers from diverse backgrounds, revision with consultants, review by the Examination Committee, psychometric analysis, and sensitivity review by editors. I am confident that these rigorous procedures adhere to testing standards and produce valid, reliable, and fair assessments of social work competence.</p>

	<p>In my daily work, I am responsible for crucial decisions affecting the safety and well-being of my clients. I value the competence earned through my education and demonstrated when I passed the licensing examination. Removing the exam requirement may result in a loss of professional status for social workers and could lead to unintended consequences.</p> <p>I strongly believe in the importance of licensing exams to assess minimum competence for entry into practice. ASWB exams serve as a gold standard in the social work profession, ensuring quality, integrity, and minimum competence to practice.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and for allowing me the opportunity to submit this written testimony in opposition to SB 24-115.</p>
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From: Catherine Simmons, PhD, LCSW

To: Representative Daugherty and Distinguished Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Subject: Written testimony requesting revision to the Senate Bill 24-115 provision that removes the Licensed Social Worker (LSW) testing requirement

My name is Catherine Simmons, PhD, LCSW. I am writing to oppose one aspect of Senate Bill 24-115.

- The provision I am concerned about removes the testing requirement for the Licensed Social Worker (LSW) credential.
- **I request a revision that pauses this part of the bill until further research can be conducted.**

I hold a clinical social work license in Colorado (LCSW), several advanced degrees and have over 28 years of combined experience as a social work academic and practitioner. I am also a question writer for the Association of Social Work Examiners (ASWB) clinical social work licensing exams.

As someone with long involvement in the exam development program, I can attest that to the robust process that ASWB follows in guarding against bias and ensuring competence. Every detail of every question is vetted multiple times as it progresses from being written by a diverse group of practicing social workers, through consultant assisted revision, Examination Committee review, pretest psychometric analysis, and sensitivity review. No corners are cut in adhering to testing standards to produce valid, reliable, and fair assessments of social work competence.

ASWB bases its exams on a job analysis called the Social Work Census, which measures what social workers do in the field to ensure that exam content is relevant and current. This process follows industry standards for measuring competence. Social work education teaches the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) competencies, which are based on what social work academics believe social workers need to know. The result is a long-standing difference between what social work educators teach and what social workers say they do in practice.

Academics are the primary advocates for removing the LSW exam. However, it is my understanding that the public has not been made aware of data about what practicing social workers believe about removing the exam requirement. By moving forward so quickly, are the voices of practicing social workers being overlooked?

I am also concerned that the pass rate data that ASWB released is being misinterpreted. While disparities exist, the causal factors for these disparities are not fully understood. There is a likelihood that the disparities are caused by factors other than the test itself. At this point in the analysis, many experienced researchers would recommend caution about making assumptions. For example, I believe that it would be helpful to know more about the education programs that do not show racial and age discrepancies. What are they doing that other MSW programs are not

doing? To learn more, ASWB is undertaking research to better understand educational factors that influence pass rates.

As an academic who also holds the LCSW credential in Colorado, I am deeply concerned with the long-term impact of deregulation. Social Workers are responsible for important decisions that affect the safety and well-being of clients. Social workers serve poor, disenfranchised, and vulnerable populations. By removing the LSW exam, what mechanism are we using to ensure minimal competency? How will clients be impacted?

Another concern is the impact on the interstate Social Work Licensure Compact. If the exam were removed, are we moving toward a tiered system in which Colorado social workers will no longer eligible for mobility?

Until more is known about the impact of removing the exam, the reasons for the disparate results, and what practicing social workers want, I recommend this committee exercise caution and pause on the part of this bill that removes the testing requirement for the LSW credential.

Thank you for your time and for allowing me the opportunity to submit this written testimony in opposition to SB 24-115.

Respectfully,

Catherine Simmons

Catherine Simmons, PhD, LCSW