

RE: [S.F. 3691](#) Social worker provisional licensure modifications and recodifying

Health and Human Services Committee

Thursday, February 22, 2024, 8:30 am

c/o anna.burke@mnsenate.gov

Dear Senator Melissa H. Wiklund and committee members,

I am writing to support [S.F. 3691](#) Social Worker Provisional Licensure modifications and recodifying.

My name is Delia Johnson, and I am currently enrolled in the BSW program. I plan to get my license in less than two years, so this issue is close to my heart because I will be a social worker of color. I was born in New York but raised in Mexico, and English is not my first language.

We know of the shortage and need for more diversity of social workers in Minnesota, where the diverse population continues to increase. According to the MN Department of Health, 93% of social workers in practice only speak English, which increases the need for translator services. Currently, with the homelessness encampments and the increase in living costs such as rent, food, childcare, and job cuts, we need more social workers who can work with diverse populations to help our communities flourish, a goal that would positively affect not only communities but also the state as a whole.

Removing the standardized exam requirement will create more opportunities for diverse low-socioeconomic social workers like me who already struggle with university tuition, kids, and living/medical expenses. With the current requirement and considering that English is not my first language, and I am the head of the household, taking the standardized exam requirement more than once (statistically) would not be financially possible. It would create another barrier to getting employed to practice a degree already costing me thousands of dollars. Furthermore, we recognize that many of us join social work out of passion because this field is underpaid, unseen, and overloaded, which is one of the reasons why there is a high turnover rate. Making social workers pay more money toward exams to practice is just adding more deductions to their already low income and even a higher deduction to social workers of color.

A study by ASWB (The Association of Social Work Boards) in 2022 found that less than 70% of test takers actually passed the exam, compared to 90% of white test takers who passed the same. This is a huge discrepancy. The exam also costs between \$240-\$260. Test takers of color were taking this exam anywhere between 5 to 10 times. This is costly to test takers of color making it an unjust requirement.

Asking test takers whose first language is not English and whom are foreign-born to take the test first, and fail it before becoming licensed as a social worker, while knowing that less than 70% of test takers of color actually pass this national exam, is essentially codifying economic injustice into our statutes. It is essentially asking test takers of color to incur additional expenses in order to obtain their license when we already know that people of color are disproportionately concentrated in poverty and least likely to afford it.

I strongly support this bill and hope that you will decide to move the bill forward.

Sincerely,

Delia Johnson