

February 21, 2024

Senator Melissa H. Wiklund
Chair, Senate Health and Human Services Committee
2107 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for SF 3691

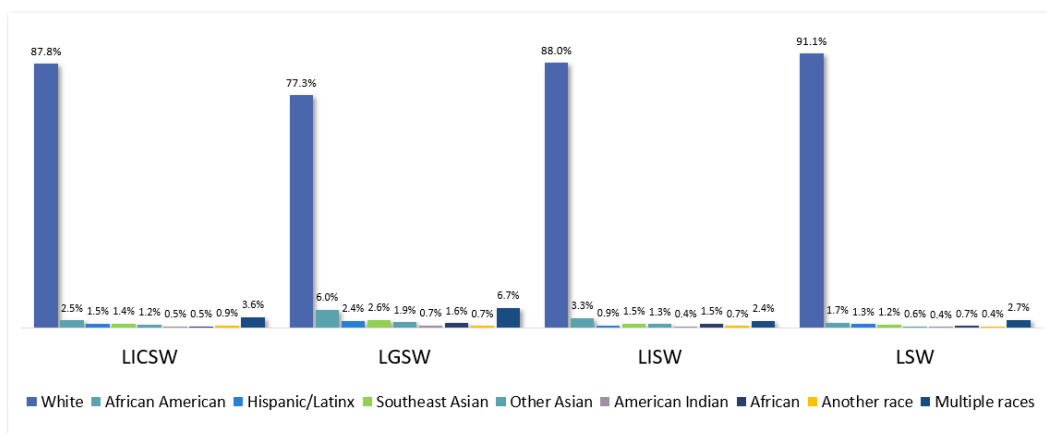
The Minnesota Board of Social Work writes in support of SF 3691. The Board's mission is protecting the public through licensing and regulation of the social work profession. The Board has over 17,000 licensees with 4 different license types.

SF 3691 proposes changes to the Board's provisional license statute. The provisional license was first implemented in August 2007 to address exam passage rate disparities among refugees and immigrants who are foreign born and communicate in English as a second language. Minnesota is the only state with this type of provisional license. With the provisional license, the Minnesota Board of Social Work demonstrated that regulation can address disparities in the licensing process and still protect the public.

The proposed legislative changes to the provisional license create an alternative pathway for individuals with social work education to obtain a social work license and a career in social work without passing a licensing exam. Individuals may choose either the exam-based path to licensure or the provisional path. To ensure public protection, the proposed expanded provisional license maintains the requirement of 2000 hours of supervised practice with a board approved supervisor to ensure a social worker is practicing ethically and competently within their scope of practice.

The Board supports this legislative proposal as a method to increase diversity in the social work workforce. The Minnesota Department of Health Healthcare Workforce Survey found a lack of ethnic diversity among licensed social workers.

Race and ethnicity of licensed social workers



The MDH Workforce Survey data also shows that licensed social workers of color are more likely to provide services to underrepresented communities. This legislative change could lead to decrease in access disparities for the community.

*“Which of the following underserved patient groups do you serve on a **daily basis**, if any? (Check all that apply.)”*

All social workers (licensing groups combined)

Patient Group	White providers	Providers of color
Immigrants/refugees	14.2%	27.6%
Other racial or ethnic minority group members	31.3%	43.5%
Low-income or uninsured patients	35.8%	41.1%
Medicaid, MinnesotaCare, or other Minnesota health care program recipients	36.4%	36.1%
Patients who require an interpreter	13.7%	20.7%
Veterans	13.3%	13.2%
Populations with disabilities	31.2%	30.7%
Unsure	1.3%	1.5%
None of these	2.2%	1.1%
Data source: MDH Workforce Survey, 2022-2024		

The Board of Social Work supports SF 3691 and asks the committee members to support the statutory changes for provisional licensure. The proposed changes protect the public and improve access to quality social work care by creating an alternative pathway to a social work license, which will increase the size and diversity of the social work workforce.

Thank-you for considering SF 3691. If you have any questions, please call or email me at youa.yang@state.mn.us or 612-617-2110.

Sincerely,



Youa Yang, LICSW
Executive Director
Minnesota Board of Social Work