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## COLLEGE OF INDIVIDUAL & COMMUNITY HEALTH

Bemidji State University Social Work Dept.  
1500 Birchmont Drive NE, Box 35  
Bemidji, MN 56601  
February 21, 2024

Dear Senator Burke:

I am writing to express my strong support for Minnesota HF3962/SF3880, which addresses critical issues regarding licensure examination and supervision in our state. As a social work educator, resident of Minnesota and someone deeply invested in the welfare of our communities, I believe that this bill is essential for ensuring the effectiveness and accessibility of social work services throughout our region.

One of the key points that I want to emphasize is that successful graduation from an accredited Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program is a testament to an individual's readiness for professional practice. By completing such a program, social work graduates have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills, and ethical principles to serve their communities competently and compassionately. A licensure examination is redundant and excludes students who struggle with exam anxiety and/or for whom English is not their primary language from the profession due to bias in the exam. In this region, creating a pathway to licensure for Indigenous graduates is critical to addressing the needs of greater Minnesota's Indigenous communities. Currently only 63% of Native American graduates pass the exam. This is by no means indicative of their readiness for practice. I've educated and worked with many outstanding Indigenous students whose knowledge is rooted in traditional practices, oral language transfer, and relational practices—none of which is captured in a licensure exam.

Additionally, licensure supervision plays a vital role in further refining these skills and ensuring that new social workers can navigate the complexities of real-world practice effectively. Licensure supervision provides invaluable mentorship, guidance, and oversight, allowing recent graduates to continue their professional development under the supervision of experienced practitioners. The current standard of 37.5 hours of licensure supervision is sufficient for undergraduate social work professionals. Availability of licensure supervisors in Indigenous communities is especially lacking. These graduates must seek multiple routes to supervision, which poses additional barriers to the profession and represents a lack of cultural humility in the provision of effective licensure supervision.

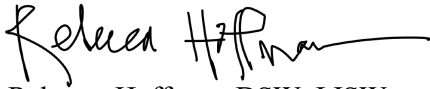
Despite the undeniable benefits of licensure supervision, it is crucial to acknowledge the shortage of licensure supervisors, particularly in greater Minnesota and Indigenous communities. This shortage poses a significant barrier to the licensure process for aspiring social workers in rural and underserved areas, limiting their access to essential support and hindering their professional growth. Additionally, many new graduates must pay for licensure supervision at the rate of \$50-100/hour (the going rate in the Twin Cities) when licensure is not available for free or at a reduced cost, a prohibitive obstacle for social workers in greater Minnesota earning significantly less than their urban counterparts. **For these reasons, I urge you to keep the standard at 37.5 hours for undergraduate licensees.**



Minnesota HF3962/SF3880 offers a promising solution to address the pressing issue of the lack of diversity and shortage of social workers across the State by expanding access to licensure. **I fully support the elimination of the licensure exam for undergraduate social workers.**

In conclusion, I urge you to support Minnesota HF3962/SF3880 and its efforts to improve access to social work licensure in our state. By investing in the professional development of social workers and addressing the lack of diversity and shortage of licensed social workers, we can enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of social work services, ultimately leading to healthier and more resilient communities. In the process, please keep the licensure supervision hours at 37.5 for undergraduate social workers. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to seeing positive progress toward the enactment of this critical legislation.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Hoffman, DSW, LISW  
Associate Professor of Social Work