

House Committee Hearing on HB 5184 & 5185

My name is Brian Philson, and I am a licensed Michigan social worker holding my LMSW with both a clinical and a macro license.

Thank you for giving me some time today to share my perspective and opinion, and to have a conversation on the proposed legislation.

Here is a little bit of my background:

- I completed my undergraduate social work degree at Spring Arbor College.
- I completed my graduate work at Michigan State University.
- I am the CEO of a mid-Michigan nonprofit that employs many staff, of whom many are licensed public health professionals including social workers.
- I was appointed to the Michigan Board of Social Work in 2012, serving a 4 year term, and reappointed four years later serving another 4 year term, and during those 8 years I served as the board chair for the majority of that time.
- I am currently serving an appointed term on the Michigan Committee on Juvenile Justice.

I am proud to be a Michigan social worker.

I am proud to have seen the journey as the field of social work became recognized as a public health profession in the state of Michigan.

I have worked tirelessly for the past 38 years to move this profession forward in a positive manner. I am also pleased to see a conversation around the modernization of social work in Michigan.

However, as a long time member of NASW-MI and a representative of 38 years in this profession, this legislation does not represent my opinion or position.

I am concerned that the proposed legislation would put us at risk of becoming a deregulated profession.

I am concerned that the proposed legislation as presented would move us decades backward and undo much of the hard work our profession has made.

I am concerned that all of the key parties and stakeholders have not come together to have honest, crucial conversations and attempted to reach an increased understanding and find some common ground.

We need to acknowledge that regulation must be a part of the conversation and public protection must not be lost in whatever our efforts are to modernize social work in Michigan.

We must also acknowledge that these are complex issues that need engaged parties that are willing to have hard conversations, but essential conversations; in order to reach successful outcomes for all Michigan Social Workers, and ultimately the Michigan public that needs to be served by those social workers.

I think the Social work compact is a great opportunity for the portability of licensees and would greatly aid in addressing the workforce challenges...that should be included in the modernization of social work in Michigan. This would do more for the portability of licensees than some of the changes currently being called for.

I think a deeper dive into supervision and the best practices around that are critical to this conversation as well, and I believe that Michigan could improve in this area.

We need significant changes and improvement to our behavioral health response systems. The mental health code needs adjustment that would modernize our practice abilities not radical changes to licensure that would jeopardize our profession.

I believe we need to seek the input of the regulatory experts that work for LARA here in our own state and to seek out relevant research that would inform and educate us on the key issues.

I do believe that there are opportunities for us to discuss modernization of social work. However, I do not believe that this legislation in its current form would move us forward as a profession.