

Support for Senate Bill 922 P.N. 959

Of the 29 professional licensure boards under the Pennsylvania Department of State, only one has no practice act. That board belongs to social workers, marriage and family therapists and professional counselor. If passed, Senate Bill 922 sponsored by Senator Chuck McIlhinney would change that.

Senate Bill 922 would create practice protection for licensed social workers, marriage and family therapists and professional counselors. It would also create a mechanism for BSW graduates to be licensed to perform front-line social work services and the bill contains a grandfathering provision for ACSWs to take the licensing exam to obtain an LCSW credential.

In the view of NASW-PA, protecting the practice of social work is vitally important, but this bill is also about protecting the public and consumers of the services licensed social workers, marriage and family therapists and professional counselors provide.

This legislation would protect populations requiring therapy, counseling or other behavioral health services by ensuring those with professional licenses are providing the clinical mental health services. NASW-PA believes qualified and licensed individuals providing clinical services to our most vulnerable populations will bring about better outcomes for the human service systems.

With 41 accredited social work programs Pennsylvania is the second-largest educator of social workers in the nation. Creating a licensure for bachelor's level social work graduates has the support of the deans and directors of social work programs at colleges and universities statewide. It will absolutely improve the service delivery to vulnerable populations and others who use front-line child welfare, juvenile justice and other social work systems.

It's time for Pennsylvania to join 43 other states and Washington, D.C. by adopting a very modest practice act. Given the importance of the social work profession to the fabric of society, we can improve outcomes and enhance the practice of social work in the Commonwealth.

The National Association of Social Workers is the largest membership organization for professional social workers, serving 150,000. In Pennsylvania alone, NASW-PA represents over 6,100 members and works to enhance the professional growth and development of social workers, to create and maintain social work standards, and to advance sound social policies.