



State of Nevada

Board of Examiners for Social Workers

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March 5, 2021

Senator Pat Spearman, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce and Labor
(Via Email)
State of Nevada Legislative Building
401 S. Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701-4747

Dear Senator Spearman and Senate Committee Members,

RE: Senate Bill No. 44 (2021)

On behalf of the Board of Examiners for Social Workers (BESW), we express support for Senate Bill 44 (SB44) that is being introduced to the Senate Committee on Commerce and Labor by the Rural Regional Behavioral Health Policy Board. We believe this legislation is essential for the social worker community while maintaining the integrity of the practice.

As an agency participant that has worked collaboratively to develop SB44, we feel quite fortunate to have been included in the drafting of this proposed legislation. The overall components of SB44 include: proposed legislation to improve behavioral health in Nevada through revised licensure requirements; and, the addition of a Licensed Master's Social Work license type.

This letter of support specifically highlights the BESW **Licensed Master's Social Work (LMSW)** section of SB44. We briefly outline how the LMSW license type will positively impact the social work industry and benefits social workers in Nevada.

The passage of SB44 is essential to the growth of the social work industry in Nevada.

There are clear benefits to licensure mobility, for social workers, employers and for the economy at large.

- Therefore, BESW is asking for the addition of the LMSW category of licensure to expand access in the Nevada labor market for a social work license type that is commonly offered throughout the remainder of the United States.
- With the addition of this fourth licensing category, BESW will be in a position to grant reciprocity in all four key social work licensing categories.
- Without this new category, BESW can't offer full reciprocity. However, we have been able to successfully rely on endorsements in 3 out of the 4 key licensing category types that are held nationally: Licensed social worker – LSW; Independent social worker – LISW; and Clinical social worker – LCSW.
- The creation of the fourth LMSW category will improve reciprocity in Nevada and create more mobility for licensed social workers that seek to move across state lines.
- BESW expects that full reciprocity may open an avenue to future discussions about interstate compacts with other state social work boards in the U.S.

The passage of SB44 bill is essential to the integrity of the social work industry in Nevada.

In explanation, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) provided an overview to BESW of U.S. licensing frameworks in a Memorandum re: Master Social Worker Licensure dated January

6, 2021. ASWB is the sole membership association for social work regulatory authorities in the U.S. and Canada.

ASWB develops and administers the social work licensing exams used by all states.

- The overview from ASWB demonstrated that inclusion of a master’s category of licensure as part of the overall regulatory framework is a nearly universal standard in the U.S. The following table was shared.

Number of social work licensees in the U.S. (2019)		
US Total	490,802	% of all
MSW (Clinical)	208,262	42%
MSW	186,631	38%
MSW Macro	36,939	8%
BSW	58,970	12%

- There are 54 U.S. ASWB member jurisdictions and forty-six of these regulate master’s practice as a separate license. Masters licensees made up 38% of all social workers licensed in the U.S. in 2019.
- According to ASWB, inconsistency with this nearly universal standard can have implications for licensure mobility and workforce development.
 - Not having a separate category of license for master’s practice may create barriers for licensees coming to Nevada. Individuals with a master’s license from another state, seeking licensure in Nevada will expect to be licensed at the same category as their educational credentials.
 - The following scenarios illustrate how having only 3 out of the 4 nationally recognized licensing categories may inadvertently create barriers:
 - Receipt of the LSW licensure type for bachelors’ practice may be perceived as a “lesser” license and may not be desirable.
 - The LISW advanced generalist master’s practice is not a commonly held license in the U.S. despite the fact that 16 states have this license type; it made up just 8% of all licensed social workers in 2019. To obtain the LISW individuals with a master’s license in another state would be required to obtain an additional period of supervised practice experience despite having practiced with a license in good standing for many years.
 - Alternately, individuals with a master’s license could choose to convert their license to the LCSW, again requiring a period of supervised practice experience.
 - By approving the additional LMSW licensure type as presented in SB44, Nevada will significantly reduce barriers for qualified master’s social workers licensed out of state that desire to work in Nevada (as outlined in the scenarios above).
- To further illustrate the distinctions among these four license types, we are providing an excerpt from the ASWB Examination Guide that explains the examination categories as administered in all states and provinces in North America, the license types, exam requirements and purpose.

ASWB Examination Categories	License Types in Nevada	Requirements	Purpose
Bachelors Examination	LSW – Licensed Social Worker	Bachelor’s degree in social work	Basic generalist practice of baccalaureate social work
Masters Examination	LMSW – Licensed Masters Social Worker (<i>proposed in SB44</i>)	Master’s degree in social work	Practice of master’s social work including the application of specialized

			knowledge and advanced practice skills
Advanced Generalist Examination	LISW – Licensed Independent Social Worker	Master's degree in social work; two years post-graduate experience in nonclinical settings	Practice of advanced generalist social work that occurs in nonclinical settings and may include macro-level practice
Clinical Examination	LCSW – Licensed Clinical Social Worker	Master's degree in social work; two years post-graduate experience in clinical settings	Practice of clinical social work requiring the application of specialized clinical knowledge and advanced clinical skills

- The addition of the LMSW master's license type will ensure that Nevada is in compliance with the ASWB Examination Policy.
 - All members of ASWB (e.g., BESW) must use the exams according to the purpose of each exam as defined in ASWB Procedures that were established in 2016. This policy is important to the integrity, validity, and defensibility of the exams. Exams can only be administered to candidates with the same credentials that the exam was designed for.
 - Nevada had previously permitted exam candidates with a Master's of Social Work (MSW) degree to take the Bachelors exam. ASWB Policy now requires that candidates with MSW educational credentials be tested using the Masters Examination.
- The proposed legislation in SB44 will resolve Nevada's issue of ASWB member compliance.

Passage of SB44 will uphold the mission of BESW as it will benefit Nevada's social workers.

- BESW ensures that qualified individuals are protecting Nevada's most vulnerable populations. To continue to uphold this aspect of our mission, BESW needs to continue to attract social workers to Nevada that are able to provide a broad spectrum of activities.
- The social work profession is one of the fastest growing professions in the U.S. Nearly 800,000 people are expected to be employed as social workers by 2028.
- In order for Nevada to meet increasing demands, BESW must strive to continue to minimize the procedural burdens of acquiring a social work license.
- To minimize procedural burdens, BESW is committed to utilizing the ASWB standardized, nation-wide licensing examinations. These examinations permit licensed social workers, in good standing in another state or province in North America, to practice in Nevada without having to take or pay for a new examination.
- Through passage of SB44, BESW will be able to easily grandparent current LSWs into the new LMSW category if they also have attained a master's degree in social work.
 - **Being stepped up into the new LMSW licensing category will not increase costs to currently licensed social workers (LSWs) with a master's degree in social work!**
- While researching best practices in social work regulation for implementation of SB44, we turned to ASWB for guidance.
- ASWB provided information about state regulations that have granted licenses for skills that LSWs have acquired while on the job.
- In order to facilitate BESW efforts, ASWB provided recent examples from other states adding a master's license and identified how they integrated active licensees into the new regulatory framework. These examples demonstrate that there would not be an additional cost incurred for a master's examination during a brief transition period.
 - Therefore, current LSWs with a master's degree would not need to 1) Decide to retest at the higher exam level; 2) Get the exam scheduled; 3) Pay for the exam; 4) Study for the exam; 5) Take the exam; and 6) Pass the exam.
 - In other words, the approach used in other states acknowledges the efforts that LSWs have made beyond having a bachelor's degree through their attainment of a master's degree in social work. It recognizes that individuals' continued practice with a license in good standing, free of sanction, demonstrates their competence to practice.

Therefore, an examination to evaluate minimum competence to enter practice is unnecessary.

- Consequently, the recent examples from other states provided by ASWB demonstrate that during the transition period, it is appropriate to count on-the-job experience of the LSWs that have a master's degree in social work in lieu of requiring the Master's Examination.
- To support this approach, ASWB provided BESW with a listing of LSWs who have taken the Bachelor's level exam along with having MSW level educational credentials.
- BESW has cross-referenced the ASWB list with the BESW database to ensure accuracy of this simple grand-parenting process.
- Finally, BESW verified ASWB's research and reviewed the mechanics of bridging the LMSW as recently legislated in two other states. BESW intends to adopt the Virginia model as it is almost identical to Nevada's situation and is easy to adapt to our needs.

In summary, we ask you to please support Senate Bill 44. SB44 is a win-win for social workers and for the State of Nevada! Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,



Vikki Erickson, LCSW, Board President
Board of Examiners for Social Workers



Karen Oppenlander, LISW, Executive Director
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