



STATE OF NEVADA  
BOARD OF EXAMINERS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS  
(BESW)

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**Board Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, December 21, 2022**

The December 21, 2022, Board Meeting was called to order by Abigail **Klimas** at 9:07 a.m. A **Roll Call** was taken. Board members in attendance: Jacqueline **Sanders**, Susan **Nielsen**, and Dr. Esther **Langston**. BESW Staff: Karen **Oppenlander**. Board Counsel/ Deputy Attorney General: Harry B. **Ward**. Consultant: Nick **Vander Poel**, Flynn Giudici; Suzanne **Olsen**, Casey Neilon. Guests: Kyle Hillman with the National Association of Social Workers, NV; Lisa DeHart, LSW; Jessica Wise, LMSW, Division of Welfare and Support of Services for Neon TANF Cash Program; Lea Case, Belz Case Government Affairs; Cara Sanner, Regulatory Services Coordinator, Association of Social Work Boards; Lisa Foley, CEO and Founder of Healing Minds; Bertrand Ithurralde, Clinical Social Work Intern, Healing Minds.

**Public Comment:** Lisa Foley identified herself as the CEO and Founder of Healing Minds, an agency in Reno, Nevada. She made comments regarding Bertrand Ithurralde's application highlighting his commitment and adherence to every requirement from the social work licensing board. She stated that he is an exceedingly talented therapist, as she had also mentioned in a written statement to the Board.

**Klimas** moved to **Agenda Item 3A – Review and Discuss October 19th, 2022, Board Minutes. (For Possible Action)**. **Klimas** mentioned that she was not present at the October 19, 2022, meeting so she will be able to approve as to form, not to content. **Ward** confirmed that she was correct.

**Motion was made by Jacqueline Sanders to approve the October 19, 2022, Board Minutes; seconded by Esther Langston. The October 19, 2022, Board Minutes were approved unanimously.**

**Klimas** moved to **Agenda Item 3B - Review and Discuss November 16, 2022, Board Minutes. (For Possible Action)**

**Motion was made by Esther Langston to approve the November 16, 2022 Board Minutes; seconded by Jacqueline Sanders. The November 16, 2022, Board Minutes were approved unanimously.**

**Klimas** moved to **Agenda Item 3C - Review and discuss BESW audit for year ending June 30th, 2022 (For Possible Action)**. **Oppenlander** stated that the audit under discussion is the same audit that the Board reviewed with Suzanne **Olsen**, Casey Neilon at the November 16, 2022, Board meeting. The audit had a minor wordsmithing change that doesn't alter the audit related to a GASB change that was noticed after the meeting. Board members received the latest copy of the audit which did not change the general content from the November presentation.

**Motion was made by Jacqueline Sanders to approve the BESW Audit for Year Ending June 30th, 2022; seconded by Esther Langston. The Audit was approved unanimously.**

**Klimas moved to Agenda Item 3D - Review and Discuss “Understanding Challenges and Opportunities in Light of the 2022 Release of Association of Social Work Boards Demographic Data” (For Discussion Only).** Klimas introduced Kyle Hillman, Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers – Nevada.

Hillman began by noting that matters that he would discuss are not proposals that NASW is introducing bills on. He indicated that he was bringing these matters to the Board in the spirit of collaboration and outreach. He hoped that the Board will have deeper conversations about what is doable and what they can join in on and support.

Hillman gave an overview of NASW and stated that when formed in 1955, NASW and other organizations pushed for a licensure structure that helped help professionalize social work. Now, he said that we are at a place where we have an opportunity to look at the entire licensing process - not just whether the examination is biased, or whether the test is warranted, but we can also look at other barriers to access. Has enough been done to create an equitable profession? He said that when he looks at Nevada, he sees that right now the profession of social workers is under attack. There are emerging professions, including an associate's level mental health profession that is moving its way across the country. Also, we have music therapists, art therapists, dance therapists, Reiki therapists, behavioral analysts that are all seeking licensure. This is happening while we have massive workforce issues. These other groups are taking advantage of this fact and are moving into places that social work was designed for, and into positions that were specifically social work jobs, or that social workers are uniquely qualified for. The positions are being filled because of the workforce issues, not just in Nevada, but across the country. Specifically in Nevada, some of these jobs have been shifted to MFTs and to counselors. Hillman asked the Board to consider barriers. What are some of the things that maybe aren't protecting the public anymore or never protected the public; and are there some things copied because that's how people were licensed and that had been the standard for professionalism. Hillman posed the question, “Is it serving the social work profession, students coming out of school, the State of Nevada”?

Hillman said one of the things that the NASW would love to see is a real investment in Nevada universities by the state. Also, we need to emphasize how we're going to recruit and ultimately retain social workers of color. Hillman stated that there probably has been too much emphasis on loan repayment when we really need to look at access from the beginning. One of the things the NASW wants to push for is the State offering scholarships like some other states for social workers of color with intent to lower the total cost of the acquiring an MSW.

Hillman suggested that the Board can look at more a permissible situation as far as who can provide internship supervision hours and at how we are making it accessible to find supervision hours. When NASW did a flash survey about a third of all social workers getting supervision hours, were also paying for those supervision hours. And he pointed out that Nevada has one of the higher licensure renewal fees in the surrounding area. Hillman also remarked that it is interesting to note that several surrounding states have two-year licensure renewals and that is another thing that the NASW would think that this Board can consider.

Hillman then brought up testing which he said knows is controversial and that a lot of states are currently looking at. He said he knows of about five states that are looking at legislation to remove the test at the lower level. Illinois and Rhode Island have already removed the ASWB test at the MSW and BSW level. Also, California doesn't require a test for the BSW or MSW levels. Hillman suggested that Nevada needs to look at what is the purpose of the test. Does it protect the public as intended? Does the data show that it's a good indicator of future success? Is it an indicator of ethical social workers? He remarked that we are seeing a much more diverse workforce and he encourages the Board to have a serious conversation about whether the tests are really serving Nevada and the social work population.

Hillman then stated that the NASW would like the Board to consider ways to fast track licensure for individuals who are licensed in other states. He thinks that due to the transient nature of Nevada, we would be better served if Nevada acknowledged other people's licensure with a simpler process. NASW recognizes that some of these suggestions are going to need legislative changes and some of these suggestions are a multi-year process. He finished by stating that as we move forward, he hopes this board will have an open mind and look at not just what some of the suggestions that NASW provided, but also the entire licensure processes. When the Board did not have any further questions, **Klimas** thanked Hillman and said that the NASW perspective is helpful as the Board moves forward with conversation and decision making.

**Klimas** moved to **Review and Discussion of the 2023 Legislative Session. Flynn Giudici Government Affairs Advocates. (For Discussion Only).**

Nick **Vander Poel** of Flynn Giudici let the Board know that there were 47 days until the Legislative Session begins. January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 is when Governor Elect Lombardo will be sworn in as Governor followed by his January 23<sup>rd</sup> State of the State address. He added that they are going through the Bill Draft Requests (BDR) along with **Oppenlander**. There are currently 892 bill draft requests to date. He stated that related to behavioral health they have been following six of those. Of the six, three have become actual bills to look at with language. There are three who have NRS 641B in the statute. Those are AB 9, AB 69, and AB 37. Vander Poel said they are still watching the other bill draft request language as it comes out to see if they'll have any impact to the social worker statute. BDR 400, which was submitted by the Southern Regional Behavioral Health Policy Board back in August, that revises provisions relating transportation for mental and behavioral health matters, has been withdrawn.

**Vander Poel** stated that as it relates to licensees there are seven bill draft requests that we are tracking with numbers only that have not had actual language formulated. Many of those were submitted back in December, pretty much the last day that members were required to submit them. As we previously discussed, there is a new contingent of legislators coming in that are going to be dealing with the learning curve. **Vander Poel** said they are looking forward to educating them on the role of social workers in Nevada. He acknowledged that there is conversation in Nevada on trying to find and cut the red tape, but also do it where individuals are doing it correctly so they can enter the workforce with Nevada being such a transient state.

**Vander Poel** continued about Governor Elect Lombardo priorities: To protect education (so obviously social workers play a key role), public safety, and diversifying economic development. If you look at the social worker's role in the state of Nevada, **Vander Poel** believes all three pegs are hit. He is looking forward to working with this new administration.

**Klimas** asked if board members had any questions or comments. She also asked **Vander Poel** how often he will be coming to Board meetings to update them. He responded that they will be running reports and transmitting those reports to **Oppenlander**, giving her updates on where bills are going. He remarked that the legislative process gets a little slow in the beginning, starts to rev up, and then we go into the final laps. He will be attending every meeting during the legislative session and providing updates. He said they follow NRS 641B very closely to make sure that the Board is okay with potential changes as they are on the move. **Vander Poel** said he will be in constant contact with **Oppenlander** and will participate with the Board's meetings.

**Klimas** asked if there were any other thoughts or discussions from the Board. **Oppenlander** said she is tracking 115 of the 892 BDRs right now, one of which is now AB 37. It is one the Board is most familiar with. As last seen, it was in draft language for the rural regional behavioral health policy boards. It has been forwarded as an Assembly Bill from Education. It relates to the Board presentation by Dr. Hunt from UNLV on the potential of changing the system and going upstream to bring younger people from K-12 forward into the behavioral health system. **Oppenlander** commented that it is an interesting bill, and she doesn't know how it's going to play out but 641B is embedded. She is bringing that to the Board's attention since it is one that they have been tracking since its conception. **Oppenlander** added that eventually we won't be tracking all 115 bills. Right now, she is doing it because of the titles. She said if you go into the 892 bills, you'll see something that says "occupational licensing, etc." She doesn't know what the words are going to be yet. As those words get fleshed out by LCB, she will be able to drop some of the tracking. Nick, Omar, and Mendy follow all the Board's "in the building kind of stuff" and they notify **Oppenlander** immediately with anything they see going on that affects the Board. Mendy for one, will text me and tell me if it's really something that I must drop what I'm doing.

**Vander Poel** remarked that with social workers sometimes you fall into Health and Human Services and sometimes Commerce and Labor. On the Assembly side, Assemblywoman Sarah Peters from Northern Nevada is the Chair of Health and Human Services. Assemblywoman Elaine Marzola is the chair of Commerce and Labor from Southern Nevada on the assembly. On the Senate side for Health and Human Services, we have Senator Fabian Doñate from Southern Nevada, and Commerce and Labor will be Senator Pat Spearman from North Las Vegas. **Vander Poel** commented that they have excellent working relationships with all of them. **Klimas** thanked **Vander Poel** for the information and asked if any other Board member had any other thoughts or discussions.

**Klimas** moved to item 3F **Board Review of Hearing for Virgilio DeSio, License No. 6200-C. (For Possible Action)**. **Ward** asked that this matter be placed on the agenda for the next meeting as he is still trying to resolve this matter and come to a resolution via consent decree. **Klimas** agreed to table this matter until the next board meeting.

**Klimas** then moved on to **Board Review of LCSW Application for Bertrand Ithurralde, LMSW. (For Possible Action)**. **Oppenlander** stated that Bertrand Ithurralde, LMSW is here today and has requested, and if it is your pleasure acting Chair **Klimas**, to put this session into closed session. If approved I'll move several people into a waiting room while we're in closed session, including his supervisor, Ms. Foley. The closed session would be Board Members, **Ward**, Ithurralde, and myself in attendance.

**Ward** replied that what he would like is for Ithurralde to request that this may be brought into closed session. There should be a quick motion by the Board to go into closed session and then

let **Oppenlander** put us in closed session and proceed that way. **Oppenlander** will turn off the recording for the open meeting and turn it back on during the closed session. When the closed session is finished, she'll turn off the recording for the closed session and bring us back into an open meeting. At that point the Board will deliberate openly on what was discussed in the closed session. Ithurralde requested that the Board move into a closed session.

**Motion was made by Abigail Klimas to move into a closed session; seconded by Esther Langston. The motion to move into a closed session was approved unanimously.**

**Klimas** stated for the record that the Board will now go into closed session and **Oppenlander** moved other attendees to the waiting room.

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The Board returned from Closed Session at 9:57 a.m. and resumed Open Session. **Klimas** declared that the Board was back in Open Session. She asked if there was any **Public Comment**.

Foley said she would like to make a **Public Comment**. She recommended that Bertrand Ithurralde receive his license as a clinical social worker. She mentioned that we are desperately in need of providers and Ithurralde brings a level of excellence that this community needs.

**Klimas** asked for any further comments? Hearing none, she asked for a motion from the Board.

**Motion was made by Jacqueline Sanders to release Bertrand Ithurralde from his 2010 Consent Decree; and to Approve Ithurralde's LCSW Application. Langston seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**Klimas** moved on to Item 3H, **Review and Discuss 2023 Board Meeting Dates Tentatively Scheduled February – June 2023, Third Wednesday, 9 a.m. (For Possible Action).**

**Oppenlander** listed the suggested board meeting dates: Monday, January 23rd, 2023 from 9 a.m. to 3:00 PM for a Board Workshop Strategic Planning Session; the following Monday, January 30th, 2023 from 9 a.m. to 3:00 PM for a Board Workshop Strategic Planning Session. Picking up on the Board's current schedule on the third Wednesday of the month: Wednesday, February 15th, 2023, 9:00 AM; Wednesday, March 15th, 2023, 9:00 AM; Wednesday, April 19th, 2023, 9:00 AM; May, Wednesday, May 17th, 2023, 9:00 AM; and Wednesday, June 21st, 2023, 9:00 AM. **Oppenlander** stated that she scheduled these dates tentatively for possible action today to cover the period of January – June 2023. **Langston** advised that she will not be available on January 30<sup>th</sup> for the strategic planning meeting as she will be travelling.

**Motion was made by Langston to accept the recommended dates for Board meetings for 2023 from January through June. Seconded by Jacqueline Sanders. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**Klimas** moved on to Item 3I, **Review and Discuss BESW Licensure Processes and Other Items Regarding Workforce Shortages in Mental Health Professions. (For Discussion Only).**

**Oppenlander** stated that as the Board has been preparing for the upcoming session throughout 2022 and she has been updating a report called Understanding the Challenge. The updated version is in the Board minutes. To summarize, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) presented information to the Board at its November 16, 2022 Board meeting. The goal was to give an overview of accurate information about the exam development process, including anti-bias measures and ASWB'S upstream solution focused approach to collaborating across the profession on addressing disparate outcomes. The presentation is available in Board minutes that are posted on the Board's website.

**Klimas** moved on to Item 3J, **Association of Social Work Boards Updates (Discussion Only)**. **Oppenlander** started with **Item I – ASWB Toolkit**. She said there was a meeting in November, and it started off for her with a meeting of administrators for social work boards in the United States and in Canada. Simultaneously the delegates like Board Member **Sanders** were meeting. **Oppenlander** stated that her administrator's group had an extremely forthcoming meeting. She said it was really interesting to have so many people speak so openly. At the end of the meeting **Oppenlander** acquired an updated ASWB toolkit that is included in the Board packet and is also available on the Board's website.

**Item ii – Update from ASWB Annual Meeting, November 19<sup>th</sup>, Scottsdale, Arizona by Jacqueline Sanders**. **Sanders** stated that it was awesome that the Board was afforded the opportunity to meet with other regulatory bodies and share concerns. She said they were able to collaboratively address new ideas for improved board and even community functions. **Sanders** the meeting was last month, and she was in a different section from **Oppenlander**. During the assembly **Sanders** presented Vicki Erickson with the Sunny Andrews Award. She said they completed the election process for expiring terms within the ASWB Board of Directors and for the nominating committee. **Sanders** stated that there were newly elected individuals that will take their positions on January 1, 2023. **Sanders** went on to say that during the assembly there were discussions where they focused on the social work deficits in schools and other critical positions, districts, and state concerns, including addressing the biases that were seen in the ASWB's recent results.

**Sanders** went on to say that at the assembly they were afforded the opportunity to role play certain concerns surrounding the environments. She said that gave individuals some comfort when they run across people in the community to addressing concerns one-to-one or sometimes in a group. Newly arisen arguments with the district and the state boards were addressed as well. For example, Utah is talking about forgoing examination requirements, which was mentioned by two members that were there from the State of Utah, along with Maryland and other areas. **Sanders** stated that she spoke with them about the concerns that their state's decision impacts Nevada, because a lot of people from those areas come here to work. She said they talked about policies and ethics (which is primary for her) and major concerns in relationship to Nevada. **Sanders** said one of the most critical takes that remained with her was that the new leadership, Dr. Stacy Hardy Chandler, who is the CEO, was aware of the audit. She said she was aware of the audit results prior to accepting her position. She understood the professional criticism and possible repercussions in advance of her new role, and she accepted it. She has history in Nevada, and she is quite familiar with what our transient population brings. In reference to our strategic plan, Chandler mentioned that ASWB would be more involved, as we can see with Cara Sanner being in attendance today to address any possible questions and concerns. Chandler mentioned they were readily as accessible should any of our public members or Board members have additional questions. **Sanders** thanked Cara Sanner for being present.

**Klimas** asked if there were any questions from the Board for **Oppenlander** or **Sanders**. There were no questions. **Klimas** remarked that this conversation will continue as we keep collecting information. **Langston** thanked **Sanders** for representing the State of Nevada. She said heard about her involvement and they said she was excellent.

**Klimas** moved on to Item 3K, **Executive Director's Report (Informational)**. **Oppenlander** announced that BESW was able to extend our current licensing database software contract through the end of December 2023. She indicated that the extension would allow BESW flexibility in dealing with any legislative session decisions that may come up. The contract extension process was completed in December 2022.

As for future agenda items **Oppenlander** expects NRS and NAC changes either from prior legislative sessions or future legislative sessions. She mentioned this as Board members would need to be called upon to weigh in on changes. **Oppenlander** declared that the Board's next meetings in January are around the Board Workshop and Strategic Planning Session. She acknowledged that it was difficult to find dates to get Board members in for six hours a day for two days in January. She thanked Board members and said they will be able to have a quorum. **Oppenlander** asked that Board members who have agreed to attend, do so because a quorum is necessary for these meetings. She said that it was unfortunate that **Langston** would be absent on one day. The meetings are scheduled for Monday, January 23, 2023 at 9:00 AM and Monday, January 30, 2023 at 9:00 AM.

**Klimas** moved on to Item 4, **Public Comment**. She asked if there were any public comments in person or by email. **Oppenlander** stated that there is no online public comment.

**Klimas** moved on to **Agenda Item 5 - Adjournment** at 10:17 a.m.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by Caroline Rhuyt.