

May 7, 2019

The Honorable Sara Gelser  
Chair, Oregon Senate Committee on Human Services

The Honorable Dallas Heard  
Vice-Chair, Oregon Senate Committee on Human Services

RE: Concerns about HB 2033

Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Heard, and Members of the Committee,

We, the directors of social work educational programs in Oregon, speak in unison with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Oregon Chapter in expressing concerns about HB 2033.

We understand the pressure DHS is under to fill vacant positions and agree that the crisis in Oregon's child welfare system requires outside-the-box thinking. We also recognize there may be potential candidates who would be qualified and dedicated based on their lived experience (such as adults who grew up in the foster care system) and who may not have the means to attend four-year college. However, based on years of research and practice experience, we believe the long-term solution to many of the intractable problems you face is higher training and licensure accountability. **Therefore, we would like to partner with the state to find long-term solutions such as: state-funded higher education for workers; increased training and licensure requirements for certain DHS personnel; improved worker pipeline; and higher pay for these positions.**

Research evidence on the viability of the child welfare workforce clearly supports the desirability of more education and training. For example, over the past 25 years, the following (see footnote) high-level reports have concluded repeatedly that workforce shortages and turnover are due to poor working conditions, not to educational barriers.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, a recent report from the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute shows that social workers did better than non-social workers on pre- and post-tests of core child welfare knowledge and skills.<sup>2</sup> Students who attain Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degrees from programs accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) attain the knowledge, values, and skills of the social work profession.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/case\\_work\\_management.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/case_work_management.pdf)  
<https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-03-357>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ncwwi.org/files/Specialized\\_Training\\_Education\\_1pager\\_12.pdf](http://www.ncwwi.org/files/Specialized_Training_Education_1pager_12.pdf)

The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) for accredited programs identifies nine core competencies that social work students demonstrate prior to graduating with their degree. Particularly salient to this discussion are:

- Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
- Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
- Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Child welfare workers have an extremely stressful job, and the inability to handle this stress contributes to the high turnover rate in child welfare workers. This reduces the number of experienced child welfare workers and increases training costs for DHS. As part of their education, bachelor's prepared social workers have learned to recognize and address their own work and personal stress. They understand the importance of being self-reflective, attending to their own trauma, setting professional boundaries, and getting support for themselves during especially difficult times. These skills are critical for child welfare workers.

As you consider this legislation, we ask the state to commit to long-term planning that would include an evaluation of other states that have moved toward requiring certain personnel to be licensed social workers. In collaboration with NASW Oregon Chapter, we remain committed to supporting the state, its educational institutions, and national child welfare initiatives to solve what is both a local and a national issue.

Respectfully Submitted,

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