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Date: February 11, 2014 at 8:38:51 AM EST
To: "dsweaney@leg.state.vt.us" <dsweaney@leg.state.vt.us>
Cc: "apugh@leg.state.vt.us" <apugh@leg.state.vt.us>
Subject: **H.656 Changes to social work license**

Dear Representative Sweaney,

I am writing to express my concerns with the substantive changes being proposed by the Office of Professional Regulation as it pertains to the social work profession in H.656. I am copying Representative Pugh as a colleague in the social work profession.

The Office of Professional Regulation is creating a brand new license for our profession as well as making major changes to the existing license and definitions to the social work profession as a whole. I do not believe that OPR has provided enough opportunities for public discussion on the issue. They had several "open meetings" last fall to share their proposals, but there was little time allowed for real discussion or answers to questions, like, why the need for a tiered license? After attending several of these meetings I still am unclear as to the problems created by the current single license system. OPR has defended that these two licenses are not progressive (one is not better or held in more esteem than the other or valued more), however the language being proposed does not support this.

Within the bill itself, there are major areas that need more discussion and agreement from the Vermont social work community. For example Section 3201.6- The definition of social work is much broader and deeper than this. With the new license (LMSW) some of what is defined here would not apply to this credential. The definition is focused on diagnostic aspects and does reflect the full scope of the profession.

I am concerned that the these two licenses are creating a message to the social work profession that if you work in a school setting, hospital, agency or government setting (including state employees) you only have the social work skills to be a LMSW, but if you want to be an independent social worker in private practice, outside the scope of an organization, you get the top credential, LICSW. It seems like the credentials should be focused on the skill set of the social worker rather than the practice venue. In addition, I believe these tiers will make it difficult for social workers to move the scope of their practice setting over time.

I have also not heard from OPR how the new license will be seen by the insurance industry. Will social workers with the new license be allowed to bill insurance companies for client meetings in the same way a LICSW may claim reimbursement? Will this impact agencies who do family work and reimburse for social workers time? Perhaps your committee already has the answers to

these questions, but I do not think many of us who are Vermont social workers do.

I hope that the Government Operations committee will fully explore the ramifications of these changes and request information from NASW Vermont, UVM Department of Social Work and other stakeholders in the profession in addition to the independent social workers voices.

thank you for your hard work,

Ellie Breitmaier, MSW, LICSW