

Chairman Wobbema and members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee:

My name is Elizabeth Loos and I am representing the North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-ND). I am here today to voice support for SB2203 – a bill concerning social work licensure testing.

The statewide workforce shortage impacts multiple sectors of our economy and society including a shortage of child welfare, addiction, and mental health professionals. There are currently more than 200 jobs requiring a social work license that are unfilled in North Dakota. Contributing to this shortage of social workers are issues with the licensure process. This bill presents an effective way to address the workforce shortage to better serve the state's families and communities with no cost to the state.

Currently, North Dakota Century Code requires that the North Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners (NDBSWE) measure competency through performance on a national exam. This bill would give the NDBSWE the ability to measure the competence of a licensed social worker in ways other than the exam currently in place. This **does not require** NDBSWE to change its licensure requirements, it merely gives them the option to suspend the test, adopt an alternative to the test, and/or create a waiver to the test. Two states have recently suspended passage of a national test as part of their licensure requirements, while seven other states are currently considering suspending the test or providing alternative pathways to licensure. Removing this barrier to licensure will increase the competitiveness of our social work job openings.

This bill does not automatically remove the precondition that NDBSWE requires applicants to pass a licensing exam, rather it provides the opportunity for NDBSWE to make changes after careful consideration and research. Further, it is important to note that any changes to licensure requirements that the board believes are necessary would have to go through the administrative rule-making process, including public comment.

On behalf of NASW-ND, I urge you to make a DO PASS recommendation on SB 2203.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Loos  
Lobbyist  
North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers