

February 16, 2023

Chairman Wobbema and members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee:

My name is Senator Tim Mathern and I am here today to introduce SB 2203 regarding social work licensure.

I am a licensed masters level social worker and served as a Interim Acute Psychiatric Treatment Committee member. This committee met regularly since the 2021 legislative session. A focus of the committee has been increasing access to behavioral health professionals in North Dakota. We learned of the shortage of professionals. I also learned that the Council of State Governments was working on increasing the number of states with similar social work licensing laws to more easily permit people to practice in adjoining states. In the process, I also learned that the exam we use may have some inherent biases.

These issues led me to introduce this bill to increase our board of social work options.

This bill would make it possible for social workers to get licensed without a test—whether that be through suspension of the test, a waiver of the test, or adopting an alternative to the test.

Many states are exploring alternative options and a couple have already passed laws that no longer require the test for lower-level licensure.

This bill gives more room to our board of social work to set parameters that I think will lead to more persons being licensed and to more options for social workers to come into North Dakota.

Passage has the potential to safely license more social workers in the state—professionals we desperately need.

I encourage you to make a DO PASS recommendation on this bill.

Thank you.

Senator Tim Mathern
Fargo ND