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HB 2340: In-Person Proponent Testimony

Becky Fast, MPA, LCSW - KS Chapter Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers

Chair Beverly Gossage and Members of the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

Thank you for the opportunity to address your Committee on behalf of the Kansas Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (KNASW).

Social workers provide the majority of mental health services in Kansas and across the nation.

Social workers have been licensed at three levels of practice since 1974 - baccalaureate (LBSW), the master level (LMSW), and the independent clinical specialist social worker (LSCSW).

We support **HB 2340 as amended** by the House. The amended bill removes barriers and streamlines processes

Expanding the Social Work Workforce

Kansas is facing a well-documented shortage of trained mental health responders. This labor shortage is intensifying as more baby boomers retire and as the demand for mental health care increases across the nation. The need for social workers is at crisis levels for clinically trained licensed professionals.

Clinical social workers are the highest level of licensure and able to diagnosis and develop treatment plans.

They are one of the keys to addressing mental health crisis across the state, but Kansas lags in the number of clinically licensed compared to neighboring states. The chart below illustrates that Kansas has difficulty moving social workers up the career ladder. **This bill, as amended, helps address barriers.**

Kansas Has a Lower Percentage of Specialist Clinical Social Workers*

State	Specialist Clinical Level Social Workers (LSCSW) (Highest Level Licensure)	Social Workers with a Masters License (LMSW) Achieving the Clinical Level Licensure (LSCSW)
Colorado	8229	81%
Missouri	6689	77%
Oklahoma	2932	76%
Kansas	2752	41%

*Kansas 2022 numbers includes licensees living outside of Kansas, retired, and practicing less than 10 hours a week

Rural and Frontier Counties Are Most Impacted

(Clinical Social Workers Living in Kansas and Practicing over 10 Hours a Week*)

Rural vs Urban in Kansas

- 1,141 Statewide
- 1,004 – 88% are in urban areas
- 137 – 12% are in rural counties

Age Distribution

- 39.4% over the age of 55
- 20.9% age 65 and over

*Source: December, 2022 report from Kansas Health Institute “Addressing the Behavioral Health Workforce Needs in Kansas.”

The national educational and training standards to graduate from a bachelor and master social work program are rigorous and extensive. Social workers must pass a second examination and complete an additional post-graduate 3000 hours of supervised practice to become clinically licensed.

National Standards for a Licensed Specialist Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)

- Master's degree from an accredited social work program which includes a supervised clinical internship over two years
- Passing score on two competency assessments - master level and the clinical level examination
- Successfully completing 3,000 hours of post-graduate supervised clinical work experience

Kansas exceeds the national standards resulting in fewer clinically trained social workers serving our state.

HB 2340 as amended Streamlines Regulation and Creates Efficiency to Licensing

KNASW supports HB 2340 as amended in the House to ensure that licensure is more obtainable for students. Currently the regulatory rules and paperwork required for social workers to become clinically licensed far exceeds the national standard across the nation. The cumbersome rules burden social workers and prevent the addition of much needed clinically trained professionals.

House Committee removed mandates proposed by BSRB

- 1) House Committee removed the proposed “Board Approved Supervisor” mandate. This same mandate language was proposed 2021 and this committee, Senate Public Health and Welfare, removed the same attempt.
- 2) House Committee further removed an additional new continuing education mandate on all professions governed by BSRB.

The House amendments remove barriers to become licensed at any of the three levels for social work.

- 1) House added flexibility in the clinical social work LCSW practice definition (K.S.A. 65-6306)
 - a. Added the words *diagnostic impression* expands opportunities to become clinically trained.
- 2) Changed the extra 15 credit hours requirement to 3 hours that is above and beyond achieving a Master's degree from an accredited social work program. This mandate added July 1, 2003 is not the standard or the norm across the nation. The regulation creates an incentive for social workers to practice in our neighboring states.

Kansas currently requires far above the national standards to become clinically licensed.

The result is clear: Kansas lags in the number of clinical social workers as compared to surrounding states. On the border, social workers cross over to Missouri and Oklahoma for licensure and stay to work.

HB 2340 as amended will put Kansas in line with neighboring states and be more competitive to attract and retain behavioral health workforce. Kansas being in line with neighboring states and states across the nation is critical as the social work compact moves forward.

Chairwoman Gossage, we encourage the Committee to advance HB 2340 as amended by the House.