Anderson, Bryan

From: Courtney Hall <courtneyahall19@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 07, 2019 10:12 PM
To: LABTestimony
Subject: Social Work Title Protection

Bill Number: HB 7292: "An Act Concerning Social Workers"
Committee: Labor and Public Employees Committee
Date of Hearing: TBD
Name: Courtney Hall
Town: Litchfield, CT 06759
Representative: David Wilson

Good evening,

My name is Courtney Hall and I am a social worker. I studied at Central Connecticut State University to receive my Bachelor's Degree in Social Work in 2016 and am currently studying at the University of Connecticut for my Master's Degree in Social Work. I am writing to you today to urge you to reconcile some issues with bill HB 7292: An Act Concerning Social Workers. It is of the utmost importance that the Labor and Public Employees Committee substitute the current bill language with the language that the CT branch of the NASW submitted. Otherwise, both social workers and consumers will be put at risk.

Title protection is crucial in the profession of social work as it ensures that consumers seeking services from a social worker receive genuine social work service – rather than work by an individual with a human services or psychology degree (a social worker by name only). While this may not seem a large difference, I can assure you: it is. In order to earn a degree in social work, one must complete a rigorous curriculum based in cultural humility, ethical practice, human behavior, and a wide variety of therapeutic treatments and interventions. In other human service fields, training is not as extensive which can lead to harmful interactions with those who only describe themselves as social workers.

It is also notable that those with a degree in social work are bound to the NASW Code of Ethics, which provides public standards that consumers can hold social workers accountable to. However, for a consumer who has been harmed by working with a social worker in name only, no legal action or complaint can be formally filed. Unfortunately, when consumers have negative interactions with those claiming to be social workers, it reflects poorly upon the profession as a whole and can make consumers hesitant to seek further services. As I am sure you are aware, this can lead to an increase in mental health conditions, substance use, poverty, and limited access to basic needs (to name only a handful of many consequences).

By offering title protection, agencies are prevented from falsely advertising services and providing substandard care. In Connecticut, doctors, dentists, veterinarians, psychologists, and massage therapists have title protection – I see no reason why social workers should not be included in this list. In fact, 35 states already have title protection for social workers, including nearby Massachusetts, Vermont, Maine, and New Jersey.

Lastly, I must advocate for this title protection act to *use the language* specified by the Connecticut chapter of the NASW. The way that the bill is currently written, only people with a *license* in social work could consider themselves "social workers." This is concerning because it alienates those with a bachelor's or master's degree who have been formally trained in social work from representing themselves as social workers. Please consider passing the HB 7292 bill *with* the language specified by the CT NASW.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Courtney Hall