



MAR 09 2011

Senate of Pennsylvania

MEMORANDUM

TO: ALL SENATORS

FROM: SENATOR CHARLES T. McILHINNEY, JR.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles T. McIlhinney, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

DATE: March 8, 2011

RE: **Co-Sponsorship Memo #18 - Social Work Practice**

In the near future, I plan to introduce legislation that creates modest practice protection for the mental health and social work services delivered by social workers, clinical social workers, marriage and family therapists and professional counselors. When the Commonwealth issues a license to perform a task, the public holds a reasonable expectation that individuals are required to hold such a license to perform those tasks. The licenses issued by the State Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapy and Professional Counseling are the only licenses issued in the Commonwealth for which there is no practice protection outlined in law. Currently 43 other states and Washington, D.C. have practice protection for the social work profession in place.

The legislation I am introducing does create many exemptions so that no public employee or contracted employee currently operating under state regulation would be impacted. This legislation does not require licensure for employment with any regulated entity.

These three professions already have defined scopes of practice outlined in their current licensure law, Act 39 of 1987, the *Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors Act*. The bill does not create a new licensure board as the composite board for all three professions has been in place since 1998. What this legislation will create are some basic expectations that social work, clinical social work, marriage and family, and professional counseling services be performed by individuals holding a license to deliver these services.

I have also included a provision in this bill to create a bachelor level social work license. With 30 nationally accredited bachelor-level social work programs in the Commonwealth, PA is the second-

largest educator of social workers in the country. The majority of PA state universities offer the BSW degree.

A BSW degree is designed to prepare an individual for the frontline delivery of social work services. The Association of Social Work Boards, the national testing organization, has a clearly outlined scope of practice for BSW level professionals and already offers the national exam necessary for licensure in other states. In fact, thirty-two states and the District of Columbia already issue bachelor-level social work licenses. The creation of this license would not create any mandate for employers, but it would begin to enhance the professionalism in the delivery of frontline services in fields such as child welfare and juvenile probation. It is in the best interest of the public to ensure that those serving individuals with mental health and social service needs are appropriately qualified and held accountable for the services they deliver.

If you would like to co-sponsor this legislation please call my office at 7-7305 or email Gail Reinard at greinard@pasen.gov.