

House Professional Licensure Committee Hearing  
House Bill 2352

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Good morning, my name is Arthur Ring and I am the Vice President of Government Relations, Public Policy, and External Affairs at Pressley Ridge. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today on the issue of professional licensure.

Pressley Ridge provides a continuum of services to troubled and developmentally challenged children while helping these children remain close to their families and communities. A nonprofit organization founded in 1832, Pressley Ridge offers innovative programs in Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia. Our \$72 million annual budget provides therapeutic interventions through residential treatment, treatment foster care, community-based services and education services. Through our 1,200 employees, Pressley Ridge and our partners provide services to over 3,500 children and their families each day. Nearly 50% of these children reside in Pennsylvania.

In Pennsylvania, Pressley Ridge provides residential care, therapeutic foster care, educational and community based services to children in 18 programs located primarily in the southern half of the state.

There are 4 critical areas that confront us today:

1. disparity between the actual costs of services and reimbursement rates;
2. challenges in recruitment of qualified staff and their long term retention;
3. unfunded mandates; and,
4. increased demands for technology and data

In many ways, recruitment and retention of qualified staff is the major issue within our field. Our own therapeutic alliance research has shown that experienced, committed staff are directly related to positive outcomes for kids. And positive outcomes for children and families directly relate to effectiveness and efficiencies within the system – making the best use of the dollars that are available.

Pressley Ridge employs a variety of human service professionals in Pennsylvania to work in the programs we offer to provide services to children and families. For many of our programs, the basic educational requirement is a bachelor's degree. This

requirement is consistent with our model of care and with regulatory and accreditation requirements.

House Bill 2352 would create a social service worker license granted upon meeting the following criteria:

- ❖ A bachelors degree in social work and passage of an examination designed to test the knowledge relevant to providing human services and the application of that knowledge to a variety of age and disability groups; or,
- ❖ A bachelor's degree with a major in psychology, sociology, human services, behavioral science, sociology, psychology, child development or human development, passage of an examination; and, a pre-determined number of hours working under clinical supervision in the field of human services.

The attainment of a social service worker license provides employers like Pressley Ridge with a means to determine if candidates have met a minimum threshold of education and experience. The attainment of a social service worker license demonstrates to us as an employer that the candidate is committed to staying in the profession. The license also provides for continuing educational requirements and ethical practice standards to which the candidate must adhere. The ethical oversight provided to those holding the license gives the employer a greater sense of trust with

the job candidate. Finally, the social service worker licensee realizes that unethical behavior likely will cause removal from employment and a revocation of the license they have worked to earn.

Pressley Ridge supports the creation of a social service worker license for these reasons. Those who work in child welfare and work with troubled and challenging children and families often have a very difficult job. Those who are adequately prepared for the work they will encounter tend to stay on the job longer and getting a higher level of job satisfaction out of their work.

As we noted earlier, our own research has shown that experienced, committed staff are directly related to achieving positive outcomes for kids. And positive outcomes do represent the best utilization of available financial resources.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to discuss professional licensure on behalf of Pressley Ridge and other children and family service organizations. We look forward to continuing conversations on this topic in the future.