

**Testimony of Kristin Nicely Colangelo, BSW, MSW, LSW**  
**Asst. Professor of Social Work**  
**Cabrini College, Radnor, PA**  
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Good Morning members of the House Professional Licensure Committee and staff,

My name is Kristin Nicely Colangelo. I am proud graduate of Temple University's BSW and MSW program. I am currently an Asst. Professor and Field Coordinator at Cabrini College in Radnor PA. I am honored to be given the opportunity to testify in front of you today on an issue I feels is so very important; the implementation of a BSW-Level License in the State of Pennsylvania.

When my students first enter the social work core curriculum they too are not clear about the uniqueness of our profession. I give an initial assignment to my Theory class asking them to write a mini-paper on what would a world look like that does not NEED the social work profession. The response I get are very amusing, ranging from "this is the stupidest assignment I have ever done" to a through explanation of what the world would look like if all social workers just suddenly disappeared! They state that we will always need social workers because people will always be addicted, always have illness and mental health issues, always experience trauma. To this I answer, and continue to emphasis over the remainder of their social work education, that other professions could very successfully handle addiction, mental health issues, and trauma without the specialized and rigorous training we as social workers must complete. Why do we have to take two semesters of Social Welfare Policy, and Social Research? Why do we have to take two courses on Human Behavior IN THE Social Environment when we also take psychology courses? Why do we have to be trained in such things as critical analysis, assessment as opposed to mental health diagnosis, solidarity instead of charity?

The answer is because our clients live within a society and a social environment that results in their need for specific, specialized intervention on not just a individual, or just a community, or just a societal level as psychology, sociology and other disciplines may prepare its grads for, but on all these levels of intervention in a well-trained, well-educated, experienced manner.

Recently I was discussing with one of my BSW recent graduates about her struggle with the implementation the theories and skills we discuss in class into her practice. She said "I am not sure what it means to be a social worker. How am I different from any of the other people at my agency." I asked her to tell me about a situation with which she struggled.

Story of boy with ADD with a psychologist and a social worker –

Her client was in school in North Philadelphia and he was required to be part of the social service programs at this school due to his depression and ADD. He had a psychologist on his case who managed his ADD and depression through medication. He was referred to the Social Work Department to take part in a truancy program, which fell under the management of the Social Work Department, required by his study team. While the Social Worker conducted her initial assessment she inquired about such things as his family composition and environment, his community, his economic situation, his living situation, his adjustment to the programs that he was required to take part in, and his feelings about the medications he had to take. She also discussed with him the environmental causes of his truancy, something he had never had been asked about before this. During this discussion she found out that his family had lost their home after his mother lost her job due to the



closing of her place of employment. No other jobs were available in their community with wages they could live on so the family became homeless. They moved in with their aunt who lives in South Philadelphia but he had not been able to apply for a formal transfer of schools for fear of being removed from his mother if the school district found out they were homeless, therefore he was taking two buses and the EL to get to his school on time. There were times when they just could not afford this fares required for him to get to school.

The Social Worker talked in-depth with this student about the this economic situation that was resulting in his truancy and his increased depressive state, as well as his deep dislike for the medications he was taking because of their side effects. Through this discussion of the systemic and environmental issues he was facing, the Social Worker was able to remove some of the internalized self-hatred the boy was living with as see that there were factors within his environment that were directly contributing to his situation. Once this information was determined, as new more empowering plan of action was able to be created by the entire study team that meet all his needs; psychological, economical, and environmental. Without the specialized skills and knowledge of the Social Worker only his mental health issues and behaviors resulting from his environmental crises, would have been addressed.

Psychology majors are thoroughly educated in the science behind human behavior. Sociology majors are thoroughly educated in the scientific analysis of social theory, social problems, and society. But our social work curriculum couples the strength of such knowledge with the skills of working in solidarity with our clients to raise the human condition by fighting for social and economic justice.

Our Core curriculum includes such skills building components as

Developing critical analysis skills instrumental in identifying gaps within our social services through which our clients so often fall. This allows us to work with our clients to bring about a more just social welfare system in which they can not only survive but thrive.

Skills for empathy, engagement, and assessment that allows us to truly work with our clients in a way the promotes human dignity and self determination.

Most importantly our social work students take part in field practicum, spending between 500-600 hours in a practice setting working under the supervision and direction of a practicing social workers. This requirements sets our graduates far ahead of non-profession graduates in that they have learned to navigate client relationships and advocacy, resource management within the social welfare system, interviewing skills to promote change under the clinical supervision of a Master's Level Social Worker, and analyzing current social policy and its implantation to indentify needs within our client's social environments.

Each component of our social work education; from theory to practice, from research to policy

analysis; is directed and overseen by our professional council, the Council of Social Work Educators, and driven by our professional mission and core values.

As a professor in an accredited Social Work program I have taken part in the CSWE accreditation process. Let me attest to the rigor and strict requirements of such a process. The CSWE analyses all aspects of our program; from overall program mission and goals to every course learning objectives through which we carry out such mission and achieve each goal. Intensive narrative components are required as well as comprehensive interviews of all parties involved in the department; students, faculty, administrators, and field instructors. The council also requires a complete examination of all



our policies and procedures, our curriculum and teaching pedagogies, and our field placements and their required criteria. This is, on average, a two-year process through which no other helping profession degree must adhere.

The Social Work degree signifies the receipt of such training and field experience upon graduation. Agencies that specify the requirement of a BSW in their employment search do so because of this training and experience. Our graduates enter the field, as all graduates who receive a professional degree do, with hours spent in the field as well as the classroom, making them able to enter the work force ready to serve our clients with compassion and intent, without judgment or discrimination, with unique skills, unique analysis, unique knowledge that truly sets them apart from those who studied under different disciplines.

Upon graduation, our students are very clear about uniqueness of their profession and what sets them apart from other disciplines at the college. They understand the importance of this difference and the distinctive training they received to fulfill the mission of our profession. I hope at this hearing today we have been able to clarify this distinction to you as well.

In closing I would strongly urge you to rethink the inclusion of our Bachelor Level Social Workers with all other human service professionals. We have a unique license for our Master's Level Social Workers and it's just as important to provide our Bachelor Level Social Workers who have undergone the rigorous education and training under the strict requirements from our council the same distinction. This license will not only protect our professional value but more importantly it will ensure the highest level of care for those we serve.

Thank you