

Testimony to Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
February 21, 2019
Support for SB193, Making amendments to BSRB licensing for certain professions

Mister Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB193. My name is Rachel Marsh, I am the Vice President of Advocacy for Saint Francis Ministries. Saint Francis is a **mission-driven nonprofit**, centered in the Episcopal tradition, that has served Kansas children and families since 1945. SFCS currently provides child welfare case management services across 75 counties to upwards of 2,600 children in Family Preservation services and to over 3,300 children in the foster care system. SFCS also provides youth residential services, substance abuse treatment, and outpatient behavioral health services. SFCS greatly appreciates your support in looking at ways to strengthen the human services workforce.

BSW and MSW. Saint Francis employs over 1,100 staff members in Kansas, including hundreds of staff licensed through the Behavioral Services Regulatory Board. The majority of our licensed case management staff are bachelor level social workers (LBSW), followed by licensed master level social workers (LMSW). Saint Francis has experienced first-hand the challenges in recruiting and retaining social workers, especially in our rural areas. Not infrequently, we hire social workers moving across state lines – whether they are moving home, moving with a spouse, or looking to gain child welfare experience. We support SB193 as it would encourage more social workers to move and work across state lines. SB193 is one step in addressing workforce challenges in child welfare – a recent top tier recommendation from the Child Welfare Systems Task Force.

48 months of experience? Saint Francis would ask the Committee to consider whether the reciprocity standards in SB193 could safely and responsibly be adjusted to offer even greater opportunity for social workers to cross state lines. We see that young people are most likely to cross state lines for life and work – and least likely to have 4 years of experience. We believe LBSWs and LMSWs could move across state lines with fewer than 4 years of experience without harm to professional standards given the other safeguards in BSRB licensing. Saint Francis believes SB193 could be amended to require 3 years of experience for reciprocity for LMSWs and LBSWs.

LSCSW. Many of our MSW social workers express an interest in applying for their license as a clinical specialist social worker (LSCSW). We want to offer our professionals every opportunity for professional development, especially as they increase skills and specializations. However, some MSWs who want to pursue their LSCSWs are discouraged by the years of supervision and tracking necessary to apply for the LSCSW. Highly qualified and competent LMSWs who could be advancing to their clinical specialist level are not doing so because the barrier to application is so high. We encourage the Committee to consider ways to strengthen SB193 that would encourage more MSWs to advance their professional qualifications in pursuit of an LSCSW.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to stand for questions.