

Testimony, House Health and Human Services, February 17, 2017
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HB 2149 – Establish An Independent Social Work Examining Committee

Good afternoon, Chairman Hawkins, Representatives. My name is Eric Sader. I am a Licensed Master Social Worker, registered attorney, and currently inactive Supreme Court approved mediator in the State of Kansas. I am proud to have been born, raised, and educated in Kansas and now educate other Social Workers and helping professionals through teaching coursework at Johnson County Community College and prior at Fort Hays State University. I additionally am a low-income housing administrator in the public sector and a private consultant.

I testify today in strong support of HB 2149's establishment of an independent Social Work examining committee, bringing the Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board (BSRB) up to national standards of excellence and ultimately benefiting the public welfare.

As a lawyer, I can affirm the ability of professionals to regulate themselves ethically and fairly. Self-regulation recognizes that communities best understand their own strengths and needs, and within those communities the best decisions are made. Self-regulation ensures accountability of a profession; it is your reputation that suffers when public trust is breached.

I cannot imagine even like-minded professionals such as paralegals and court transcriptionists having jurisdiction over attorney-licensing, and with good reason; it makes no sense. Attorneys may share the clients and physical space of other justice professionals, but attorneys play a particular role in the system. Attorneys subscribe to a particular ethics code, undergo particular training, and hence have tailored oversight. Social Work is no different. Social Workers subscribe to our own ethics code, undergo our own accredited training, and hence should have our own oversight.

It is easy to lump "behavioral sciences" into a singular category, but that category is nowhere near monolithic. Beyond our sheer numbers, Social Work is ripe with its own history and approach to addressing human need. Social Work unlike the other professions the BSRB regulates is not traced back to the couch of Sigmund Freud but instead to the urban inner cities of the Settlement House Movement, where the nation's first Social Workers provided educational, recreational, and other social services to the community. It is this emphasis on Person-in-Environment that marks Social Work as a profession best situated for particular roles in our society requiring unique licensing considerations.

I do not speak today on behalf of the other professions governed by the BSRB; I cannot speak to what is best for them and their future in the state. I instead speak from a Social Work education, Social Work career, and Social Work position. And without hesitation, I can guarantee that for Social Work to best benefit Kansans from Elkhart to Atchison, HB 2149 is desperately needed and should move forward today toward becoming law.

I thank you for your time, your serious consideration, your recognition of the needs facing the Social Work profession, and ultimately your commitment to the people of Kansas.