

# HOUSE . . . . . No. 4451

---

---

## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

---

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, March 6, 2024.

The committee on Higher Education, to whom was referred the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1253) of Christine P. Barber, Michael P. Kushmerek and others that the Department of Education create and administer a field placement grant program to ensure a stable, diverse workforce of licensed social workers, reports recommending that the accompanying bill (House, No. 4451) ought to pass [Representative Pease of Westfield dissents].

For the committee,

DAVID M. ROGERS.

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 4451**

---

---

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court  
(2023-2024)**  
\_\_\_\_\_

An Act relative to social work uplifting practices and exam removal.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1           SECTION 1. The first paragraph of section 131 of chapter 112 of the General Laws, is  
2 hereby amended by striking out the words “has passed an examination prepared by the board for  
3 this purpose;”.

4           SECTION 2. The first sentence of the first paragraph of section 132 of chapter 112 of the  
5 General Laws is hereby amended by striking the words “Examinations for licensed certified  
6 social workers, including those in independent clinical practice” and inserting in place thereof  
7 the following words:- Examinations for licensed independent clinical social workers.

8           SECTION 3. Chapter 112 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after  
9 section 135C the following section:-

10           Section 135D. To ensure a stable, diverse workforce of licensed social workers in the  
11 Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and to provide for increased support and retention of  
12 practicing licensed social workers, the executive office of health and human services shall create  
13 and administer a field placement grant program. The program shall, subject to appropriation,

14 provide grant funding to designated recipients with a specific focus on recruiting and retaining  
15 Masters of Social Work (MSW) students from historically marginalized communities and low-  
16 income communities. Funds to establish this program shall be allocated from state, federal, or  
17 other dedicated resources, including existing trust funds.

18 Eligible applicants must attend a school of social work Masters program physically  
19 located in Massachusetts that has been accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.

20 To be eligible for consideration, applicants must submit the following:

21 (i) Applicant demographic background information, including, but not limited to, race,  
22 ethnicity, geographic location in the state, and date of birth for purposes of data collection;

23 (ii) Applicant's school of social work, type of Masters program, and grade point average;

24 (iii) Applicant's stated and signed commitment to working in Massachusetts post-  
25 graduation for at least 2 years; and

26 (iv) Applicant's 1-page statement on the importance of this stipend in the applicant's life  
27 and how the grant will support their educational goals and the workforce needs of the  
28 Commonwealth.

29 Priority for the field placement grant program shall go to first-generation college students  
30 and persons from currently underrepresented communities in the social worker profession.

31 Applications will be submitted and considered on a rolling basis between January 1st and no  
32 later than March 1st of each year. Recipients of stipends shall be notified no later than April  
33 15th.

34 Stipends shall be allocated as follows:

35 (i) A current MSW student in good standing completing their first-year field placement of  
36 16 hours per week shall be eligible for a monthly stipend of \$1,000 per month, not to exceed  
37 \$8,000 annually.

38 (ii) A current MSW student in good standing completing their second-year field  
39 placement of 24 hours per week shall be eligible for a monthly stipend of \$2,000 per month, not  
40 to exceed a total of \$16,000 annually.

41 (iii) Advanced standing students who are only required to conduct one field placement  
42 shall be eligible for the second-year field placement stipend.

43 Applicant data, including application details submitted, shall be tracked by the executive  
44 office so that the program efficacy can be evaluated.

45 SECTION 4. Section 136 of chapter 112 of the General Laws is hereby amended by  
46 inserting after the fourth paragraph the following paragraph:-

47 Licensed independent clinical social workers engaged in independent clinical practice  
48 who provide one-on-one supervision to a licensed certified social worker, Masters of social work  
49 intern, or Bachelors of social work intern, shall be eligible to receive up to 8 continuing  
50 education credits during a licensing period for this supervision.

51 SECTION 5. The executive office of health and human services shall conduct an  
52 evaluation of the impact of removal of the licensing examination requirement for Licensed  
53 Certified Social Workers under sections 1 and 2. The executive office shall contract with an  
54 independent evaluation consultant to perform the evaluation. The evaluation shall include an  
55 analysis of the impact of removing the examination requirement on alleviating shortages of

56 qualified social workers, expanding access to quality behavioral health services, increasing the  
57 diversity of the social worker workforce among diverse language skills, race, ethnicity, and  
58 cultural backgrounds, and the impact of any increase in diversity on patient care, particularly for  
59 vulnerable populations. In preparing the evaluation, the consultant shall meet with  
60 representatives of organizations representing social workers, social work education, social work  
61 testing, social work patients, behavioral health advocacy organizations, and other groups that  
62 may assist the evaluation. The evaluation and analysis shall be conducted independently of the  
63 executive office. The executive office shall submit the evaluation to the committee on higher  
64 education, the committee on mental health, substance use and recovery and the house and senate  
65 committees on ways and means no later than July 1, 2028.

66 SECTION 6. Sections 1 and 2 are hereby repealed.

67 SECTION 7. Sections 1 and 2 shall take effect on January 1, 2026. Section 6 shall take  
68 effect on July 1, 2029.