

Testimony of Mary Meis in support of HB 682

I am Mary Meis, I have lived in Shelby, Montana since 1986, and have worked as a Clinical Social Worker in Montana since then, licensed as a clinical social worker since 1988 in Montana. I have also served on the licensing board from 1989 to present. My last term expired December 31, 2004. I continue to serve until Governor Schweitzer makes board appointments. Because of board service and being appointed to represent rural practice on exam development, I have information salient to the bill before the committee.

I am going to address the concept of minimum competency.

Minimum competency in the exam is based on the KSA's (knowledge, skills, and abilities) to do the job; it is not based on college course work (think SAT's ACT's kids take to get into college—require a minimum score to get in)

Currently about 70% nationally who take the exams pass the exams (which mean possession of the minimum competencies to enter a professional field of work.

The exam has a high validity (tests what it is supposed to) and reliability (retests consistently)

This exam is the most culturally unbiased professional exam in the country

The exam is written to an 11<sup>th</sup> grade reading level so that the exam tests to knowledge, skills, and abilities not reading perseverance.

Test developers survey to what people doing the work are doing.

This is the only exam in the country that tests to the generalist KSA's of social work. In the past as is the current practice there is a lot of word gymnastics to avoid using social worker in the title of many jobs, but it is "social work" as the public understands it.

Gives the state the ability the ability to assure as best as possible that licensees (people practicing social work) meet minimum competencies, as well as an avenue through the complaint process for those that have been licensed who are practicing outside the standard specified (incompetently) in the statute and applicable rules.

Gives the state a documentable minimally competent work force within this domain.

As a final point, from serving on the screening (the committee that investigates complaints) it has happened several times since 1989 where member of the public have come before the screening committee with concerns about incompetent practice—and the committee would have to say "This committee has no jurisdiction, that person is not licensed" "Is there any way you can stop this person from doing this to other people", they would ask. The committee's answer would be no.

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