



National Association of Social Workers

...the power of social work

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Testimony SB 5163 Committee on Humans Services and Corrections

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the benefits of SB 5163 that would require child protective workers to be licensed as Social Workers.

I am Hoyt Suppes, Executive Director of the Washington State Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). We are in support of SB 5163 and request a minor amendment to this important and significant legislation. We request that in line 11 the words **a Social Worker described under chapter 18.225 RCW or** be added before the word licensed:

*Any child protective services worker who is directly engaged in: (1) Investigation of reports of alleged child abuse or neglect; (2) assessment of risk of abuse or neglect to children; or (3) provision of or referral to services, including law enforcement, to remedy conditions that endanger the health, safety, and welfare of children, must be a **Social Worker described under chapter 18.225 RCE or licensed in good standing-in a social work classification under chapter 18.225 RCW, and bonded.***

This minor amendment will allow Social Workers that hold a degree in Social Work from an accredited School of Social Work or who are licensed as a Social Worker in Washington to be hired as child protective service workers. This inclusion of degreed Social Workers will increase the pool of potential candidates to be available to be hired.

Children are our state and nation's treasure. Children are a vulnerable population. Children look to adults for trust and protection. Since the late 1980s studies have found that workers with either a BSW or MSW degree in Social Work out perform those workers in the same jobs who hold non-social work degrees. The key findings of these studies include the following:

- Social work majors had the highest quality assurance ratings and Merit Examination Scores.¹
- Supervisors rated MSWs as having the highest performance ratings and BSWs the second highest.²

¹ Dhooper, Royse, & Wolfe. Does Social Work Make A Difference? *Social Work*, 35(1),1990.

- MSWs and BSWs were more effective in permanency planning for children in foster care than workers without a social work degree.³
- MSWs and BSWs outperformed non-social work degreed social service workers when dealing with complex cases.⁴
- In three states that were studied an Agency-University partnership that utilized Title IVE funds found that BSWs and MSWs who received their degree under Title IVE funds found that BSWs and MSWs who received their degree under the training funds remained in the employ of the child agency longer than other workers.⁵
- A National Association of Social Workers (NASW) survey of professional social workers in child welfare agencies found that BSWs and MSWs felt safer making home visits alone; have more tenure and higher interest in remaining in child welfare; and spend a little less time on paperwork compared to non-social work degreed child welfare workers.⁶
- The Child Welfare League of America found that data supports the premise that a social work education is the best preparation for practice in child welfare.⁷

Professional Social Workers must complete a rigorous curriculum that includes core competencies determined by the national Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in order to earn a BSW or MSW degree. Social workers are educated in a “person in environment” approach to Social Work that assures the most holistic and comprehensive approach to working with clients. This unique perspective helps Social Workers to not only assist people in reaching their full potential, but also contributes to building healthy and productive families and communities. Social Workers have specific skills and knowledge base in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities that grounds the Social Worker in a much broader understanding of client needs than an individual with a related degree brings to the work. Degreed Social Workers have the advantage of having completed field internship(s) under the supervision of a professional Social Worker, which means even a new graduate arrives with real world experience. Only BSWs and MSWs practice under the *NASW Code of Ethics*, which serves as a guide to the professional conduct of Social Workers and as a protection to employers and consumers.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this conversion. The Washington State Chapter urges your support and passage of SB5163 with our proposed amendments. The Washington State Chapter is the largest professional organization representing licensed and non licensed Social Workers. We represent approximately 2,300 Social workers who work with children, families, veterans, and the elderly across Washington State.

² Dhooper, Royse, & Wolfe. Does Social Work Make A Difference? *Social Work*, 35(1),1990.

³ Albers, Reilly, &Rittner. Children in Foster Care: Possible Factors Affecting Permancy Planning. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 10 (4), 1993.

⁴ Booz, Allen, & Hamilton. The Maryland social work services job analysis and personnel qualifications study. *Report prepared for the* Department of Human Resources, State of Maryland. 1987.

⁵ U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO). Child Welfare: HHS could play a greater role in helping child welfare agencies recruit and retain staff. 2003

⁶ National Association of Social Workers. If You’re Right for the Job, It’s the Best Job in the World. June, 2004.

⁷ Child Welfare League of America. Research Roundup, Child Welfare Workforce, September 2002.