Statement on ASWB Licensing Data

On Friday, August 5, 2022, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) released data regarding the pass rates of social work licensure examinations, including the ASWB Clinical, Master's, and Bachelor's level exams. This release represents years of advocacy in the making. This decade-long effort by social work advocates, organizations, and higher education represented a significant victory on behalf of the greater social work community (DeCarlo, 2021; NASW, 2022). That victory was short-lived, however. Upon reading the analysis, we were all collectively shocked to learn the extent of pass rate disparities.

The data released by ASWB (2022) indicate glaring disparities which warrant action based on demographics such as age, race, and gender. While these discrepancies are present in other standardized tests, it is alarming to see this injustice in examinations required to demonstrate a proficient social work knowledge base necessary for practice.

Social work programs require access to additional data in order to have a complete picture of the problem and to better determine the dimensions that are a program issue versus a testing system issue. For, we can assume that based on the ASWB analysis of their own data, its current state is shrouded in mystery. For example, the vagueness in excluding data with a population of ten or less prevents adequate understating of bias related to specific minority group performance.

Although the data is shocking, the solution lies in the dismantling of an oppressive system, rather than removing the path to licensure. Social work licensure validates and protects our profession, requiring social workers to adhere to a well-established code of ethics. Licensure establishes the social worker's credibility with other licensed professionals, protects our clients and communities, and elevates the profession. The problem instead lies within a flawed

examination which does not accurately measure the competence of the test-taker. Here at Concord University, we believe that the social work community is a powerful force and can create positive change.

Accordingly, in agreement with the National Association of Social Worker's recent press release entitled: *ASWB social work licensing exam pass rate data confirm concern over racial disparities* (2022), the Concord University Social Work Program would like to affirm our commitment to confronting systemic racism wherever we see it, and we certainly see it here. In doing so, we must collectively work on anti-oppression reforms to ensure each person graduating from an accredited social work program has an equal opportunity to engage in practice.

To that end, this statement seeks to inform our campus and the broader community that in working toward equality and equity, we must acknowledge social work professional standards require:

- Embracing diversity across all levels of practice; and,
- Commitment to anti-racism and anti-oppression at all levels of practice.

As such, the Concord University Social Work Program calls for the following action from the Association of Social Work Boards:

1. Develop and validate a new, unbiased, and inclusive model in collaboration with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and National Association for Social Workers (NASW).

2. Develop a committee comprised of social work stakeholders from diverse backgrounds to evaluate the current testing data, provide appropriate accommodations for all future test-takers, and make recommendations for future remedies.

3. Suspend testing-related fees for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and test takers over the age of 45 until an equitable test has been developed and validated.

4. Commit to working toward a future that is more diverse, equitable, and inclusive for all social workers by encouraging diversifying the social work workforce by directly addressing these disparities.

As members of the larger social work community, we all have an important role to play in advocacy and social justice. Please join us and stay involved in this conversation, as we work collectively to dismantle systems of oppression, wherever they may exist. For more information, please visit Contributing to the Conversation: 2022 ASWB Exam Pass Rate at

https://www.aswb.org/exam/contributing-to-the-conversation/

References

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