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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 02/25/13

SPONSOR Miera LAST UPDATED _____ HB 619

SHORT TITLE Social Work License for Some Degrees SB _____

ANALYST Martinez

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY13	FY14	FY15		
	Unknown		Recurring	Other State Funds

(Parenthesis () Indicate Revenue Decreases)

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY13	FY14	FY15	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total		Unknown			Recurring	Other State Funds

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Regulation and Licensing Department (RLD)

Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 619 (HB 619) renames the title of Section 61-31-12 of the Social Work Practice Act from ~~Licensure Without Written Examination~~ to now "Licensure With Written Examination For Certain Individuals." This name change and added language would amend the Social Work Practice Act to allow certain individuals with advanced degrees to be licensed without written examination regardless of date of application. HB 619 adds the following language: has filed an application, has a master's degree in social work, meets all other requirements for licensure as a master social worker and has been employed for at least three years in a private agency or public agency under the title of social worker or other title under which the applicant is deemed by the board to have been practicing social work.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

HB 619 would increase the volume of applications received for the New Mexico Board of Social Work. The fiscal implications are unknown at this time as we do not know how many individuals this would impact; however, if the applicant does not meet the minimum requirements the board would be required to hold a hearing in order to deny a license. The Board would be required to hire a hearing office and pay costs associated with travel for staff to conduct hearings.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The New Mexico Board of Social Work began licensing in 1990 and did allow a grandfathering period for one year for individuals who did not have a Social Work Degree. From 1991 to present the board has only licensed individuals who have obtained a bachelors or a Masters degree in social work from a program accredited by the council on social work education, and passed the Association of Social Work Board examination (ASWB).

In the 2009 regular session SJM 55 was passed and requested that the CYFD conduct a study to determine the need for social workers, amongst other things such as; the cost of graduate school, and the need for student loan forgiveness for social workers. The CYFD discovered the following:

- Thirteen percent intend to retire in the next five years and almost 25% intend to retire in ten years.
- Given the average rate of growth of New Mexico's population, the increasing number of retirees, and the current graduation rates for social workers, New Mexico social work caseloads, both private and public practice, will increase by more than 50% by 2030.
- The average cost for a graduate social work degree is \$10,500, not including the cost of living or the need to complete 928 unpaid hours in a field placement. With other costs included, it is possible for a two-year graduate degree to cost close to \$35,000.
- Average salary for respondents carrying a student loan was in the \$35,000 to \$40,000 range.
- Licensed social workers report a higher average salary and higher job satisfaction than non-licensed social workers, regardless of degree status.

The CYFD comments:

The additional section being proposed would impact both public and private agencies, and has both pros and cons. It could benefit agencies hiring licensed social workers because there are many professionals who have the MSW but are unable to pass the written licensure tests, resulting in both dismissals and a diminished hiring pool of qualified candidates for positions that require a social work license. It could hurt agencies those written tests accurately identify a level of cognitive performance and decision making necessary for the critical decisions facing both public and private agencies.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

If this legislation passes, a clear administrative process would need to be developed and enforced as to what applicants would be required to take an examination and who would not in order to have consistency in the Board office.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

It is unclear why adding specific dates for the application for a social work license should be added, as those dates cover 1989 through 1992, and professional social service workers now would not benefit from such changes. They would have had to apply for the exception during those four years, which would not impact current professionals.

RM/blm