

Senate Fiscal Agency  
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BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 657 (as reported without amendment)

Sponsor: Senator Dale L. Shugars

Committee: Economic Development, International Trade and Regulatory Affairs

Date Completed: 11-1-99

### **RATIONALE**

Social workers often play an integral role in approaches used to help individuals, families, and groups cope with and resolve personal, family, and community problems. Social workers work in a variety of settings, including hospitals, schools, mental health clinics, and public agencies. Through direct counseling, social workers help clients identify their concerns, consider solutions, and find resources for assistance. Since social workers often refer clients to health care specialists in various areas, they frequently work with other health care professionals, such as psychologists, counselors, and marriage and family therapists who are regulated under the Public Health Code. Social workers, however, are regulated under the Occupational Code. Some people believe that these professionals are members of a health care field similar to psychologists, counselors, and marriage and family therapists, and thus should be regulated under the Public Health Code instead of the Occupational Code.

### **CONTENT**

**The bill would amend the Public Health Code to provide for the registration and regulation of social workers, and specify application and license fees (which would be the same as current fees). The bill also would repeal Article 16 of the Occupational Code, which currently provides for the registration and regulation of social workers, and provisions in the State License Fee Act that provide for an application fee and an annual registration fee (MCL 338.2245).**

The bill also would create the Michigan Board of Social Work in the Department of Consumer and Industry Services and require the Board to register social workers. The Board would consist of four certified social workers, two social workers, and three public members. Current members of the Board of Examiners of Social Workers would serve as the initial members of the new Board until their successors were appointed or until their respective terms expired, whichever occurred first. The bill

specifies that the terms of office of members of social work boards and task forces would expire on December 31, four years after appointment, except for persons appointed to fill vacancies.

The mandatory academic training for social workers would have to be obtained from an accredited training program, college, or university that was approved by the Board.

A person registered under current provisions of the Occupational Code on the bill's effective date would remain registered until the registration expired; then he or she could renew the registration under the provisions of the Public Health Code.

Rules promulgated by the current board and in effect on the bill's effective date would continue in effect to the extent that they did not conflict with the Code, and would have to continue to be enforced. The rules could be amended or rescinded by the Director of the Department.

MCL 333.16131 et al.

### **ARGUMENTS**

*(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)*

#### **Supporting Argument**

Under the bill, the regulation of social workers would be moved from the Occupational Code to the Public Health Code, which regulates health care professionals such as psychologists, counselors, and marriage and family therapists. All of these fields are subject to confidentiality provisions, require education and experience in order for individuals to enter the fields as independent practitioners, and share some individual practitioners--for instance, an individual may be both a psychologist and a marriage and family therapist. Placing the regulation of the social work profession under the code that regulates other health care professions would assist the public and members of the other health care professions to

file complaints, analyze discrepancies, and make inquiries regarding the performance of social workers. Apparently, there are no current provisions in the Occupational Code that address these concerns.

Legislative Analyst: L. Arasim

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: M. Tyszkiewicz

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.