



**State of Connecticut**  
**DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES**

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**Testimony of Christine Perra Rapillo, Chief Public Defender**

**Public Health Committee - March 4, 2019**

**H.B. 7198, an Act Concerning Social Workers**

The Office of Chief Public Defender does not support **H.B. 7198, An Act Concerning Social Workers**. The bill proposes to categorize "licensed" social workers as the only professionals who may use the title of "social worker". The Division of Public Defender Services, as well as other state agencies including the Department of Children and Families, employ social workers for whom the job description does not require that the person is licensed.

The Division currently employs 38 social workers who are either classified as Chief Social Worker, Social Worker I, II or III. The majority of the Division's social workers have been educated and trained as professional social workers and have BSW, MSW or DSW credentials. Of the 38 social workers employed, 29 have social work degrees and 9 have a degree in a related field. This latter category includes employees who have been employed in excess of 6 years with this agency, with 8 of the 9 being employed from 17 to 31 years. This agency does not require that any of its social workers be licensed as licensure is typically required when working for a treatment agency that bills insurance carriers for services.

The Office of Chief Public Defender requests that the Committee not support this bill as drafted. Instead, this agency proposes that the Committee consider substitute language which would grandfather into the statutory framework those "social workers" currently employed by the Division who possess a BSW, MSW, DSW or a degree in a related field. In addition, the Office of Chief Public Defender requests that it be exempt from any licensing requirements. This agency is willing to work with the sponsors of this legislation to discuss this further. Thank you.