



HB 5166 — An Act Concerning Social Work Licensure

As Amended by House Amendment Schedule A

WHAT THE BILL DOES

HB 5166, as amended, suspends the ASWB Master's exam requirement for the Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) credential in Connecticut **for three years, effective upon passage**. All other requirements remain fully intact, including an accredited MSW degree, state licensure, and supervised practice hours toward LCSW. The LCSW clinical exam is **not affected**.

WHY THIS BILL

Workforce shortage: Connecticut faces a critical social work shortage. The exam requirement creates unnecessary barriers for qualified MSW graduates.

Equity concerns: The ASWB exam has documented disparities in pass rates across race, age, and language, limiting who can enter the profession.

National trend: Illinois, Rhode Island, Colorado, Massachusetts, Utah and California have already removed or are reconsidering exam requirements for master-level licensure.

CT precedent: The ASWB Master's exam was already suspended in Connecticut until January 2026, without adverse impact on professional standards.

BILL STATUS & WHAT REMAINS REQUIRED

House vote: Passed 142–2 (April 9, 2026)

Current status: In the Senate

Effective: Upon passage

Duration: 3-year suspension (not a permanent removal)

Still required for LMSW:

- CSWE-accredited MSW degree
- CT state licensure approval
- Supervised clinical practice hours when pursuing your LCSW
- Ongoing professional oversight & renewal

ADDRESSING COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Misconception	The Facts
HB 5166 removes the only objective measure of competence.	False: The exam is not demonstrably objective. Furthermore, competence is established through an accredited MSW program, rigorous clinical practicums, and state licensure, all of which remain.
HB 5166 lowers professional standards.	Misleading: The bill addresses workforce shortages and documented exam inequities. A three-year suspension allows CT to assess impact while expanding access. Educational and practice standards are unchanged.
HB 5166 puts clients and communities at risk.	False: Suspending the exam allows more qualified professionals to enter the field during a critical workforce shortage. Supervision requirements, licensure, and professional oversight remain fully in place.
HB 5166 will lower wages and professional standing.	Misleading: Wages and reimbursement are tied to degree, licensure, and experience, not the master's exam. No qualifications are being removed.
No other states are suspending or removing the exam.	False: Illinois, Rhode Island, Colorado, and California have already removed or created alternative pathways. CT's three-year suspension is a measured step in a national reform conversation.
Connecticut social workers will not be able to join the emerging multi-state licensing compact.	False: Connecticut is already a member of the multi-state licensing compact. Participation in the compact is optional for individuals, and only those licensees who choose to join will be required to take the exam. For more information, visit: https://swcompact.org/