

WHEREAS, Nationally accepted standards of practice for child welfare require the employment of trained social workers and other qualified human services professionals; and

WHEREAS, The Child Welfare League of America conducted a comprehensive review of Maryland's child welfare system in January 1997 and recommended that the Social Services Administration should phase out contractual direct service worker positions, improve training, and reduce caseload ratios; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of the caseworkers in Maryland's child welfare system do not meet these standards; and

WHEREAS, One out of six child welfare staff members is employed on a contractual basis, without benefits, contributing to an unacceptably high rate of turnover; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

**Article 88A - Department of Human Resources**

3A.

(A) BY DECEMBER 31, 1998, THE SECRETARY OF HUMAN RESOURCES SHALL DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND RETENTION OF ~~QUALIFIED, CULTURALLY COMPETENT~~ CASEWORKERS AND CASEWORK SUPERVISORS WHO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SECTION.

(B) ON OR AFTER JANUARY 1, 1999, THE SECRETARY:

(1) SHALL HIRE AS CASEWORKERS ONLY HUMAN SERVICES PROFESSIONALS, SUCH AS THE FOLLOWING:

(I) SOCIAL WORKERS LICENSED IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE 19 OF THE HEALTH OCCUPATIONS ARTICLE;

(II) PSYCHOLOGISTS LICENSED IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE 18 OF THE HEALTH OCCUPATIONS ARTICLE;

(III) PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS ~~LICENSED~~ CERTIFIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE 17 OF THE HEALTH OCCUPATIONS ARTICLE;

(IV) NURSES LICENSED IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE 8 OF THE HEALTH OCCUPATIONS ARTICLE; ~~AND~~

(V) SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS CERTIFIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATIONS ADOPTED UNDER TITLE 6, SUBTITLE 7 OF THE EDUCATION ARTICLE; AND