

RECEIVED
IRRC

2983
Montgomery, Cynthia

From: Nathaniel Prentice [nateprentice@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, April 02, 2013 4:32 PM
To: Montgomery, Cynthia
Subject: Proposed license fee increase

2013 APR 11 AM 10:29

Ms. Montgomery,

My name is Nate Prentice. I am an LCSW and pastoral counselor who works in a private practice in Delaware County, PA. The National Association of Social Workers informed me that the Licensing Board is proposing a 65% increase in its fees. I strenuously object to this and am taking time out of my very busy day to explain why to you.

I have been a social worker since 1989, first as a BSW, then as an MSW in the mid 90's. When I started out in the field, I made about \$33,000 in 1996, with benefits. This was considered to be low at the time. A few years ago, I decided to follow my passion for counseling and go into private practice. Last year, I made \$31,000 with no benefits. I am also a husband and father of two kids. My wife, a nurse, helps, but we are barely scraping by. Over the years, as you know, insurance reimbursement has been stagnant for around a decade or more. In addition, we are in a recession, so people are deciding to forego counseling as an added expense. Personally, I know butchers and secretaries with a high school diploma who make more money than I do. I have spoken with many of my peers in this area who work for different agencies, and they all report that they are doing about as poorly, as the industry goes to fee for service with no benefits and no job security, and as insurance companies look for ways to cut costs and deny/delay reimbursement. I do not project that it will get any easier in the future. I suspect that if you have attended one Board meeting, you have learned the same, unless they don't talk about this reality in the Board meetings.

In the midst of this, your Board is proposing a huge hike. At this point I am robbing Peter to pay Paul and deciding between my medication and the mortgage in order to continue the work of saving lives from suicide, homicide, and psychosis. Small as the increase may be to your Board, I predict that February of the renewal year will be extremely difficult for me as a result.

May I suggest that the Board's efforts are better directed at dealing with whoever handles behavioral health insurance regulation and reimbursements in Pennsylvania? If we can get a living wage as social workers, maybe then we can afford your 65% increase.

Feel free to contact me with questions or concerns.

Nathaniel Prentice, MSW, LCSW, CAS-PC