



## Our Mission

The legislature declares that, in order to safeguard the public health, safety, and welfare of the people of this state against unauthorized, unqualified and improper practice of social work, it is necessary that a proper regulatory authority be established and adequately provided for.

**WINTER  
2025**

# News | Louisiana State Board of Social Work Examiners

Hyacinth McKee, LCSW-BACS  
**Chairperson**  
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Jamie Barney, LCSW-BACS  
**Vice Chairperson**  
Prairieville

Bora Sunseri, LCSW-BACS  
**Secretary/Treasurer**  
Baton Rouge

Jamar Ennis, Esq.,  
**Consumer Member**  
Prairieville

Trinity George, RSW  
**Board Member**  
Pineville

Melissa Smith Haley, LMSW  
**Board Member**  
New Orleans

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## From The Chair

*Dr. Hyacinth McKee LCSW-BACS*

*Greetings,*

The Public and Social Workers Protect the Public...

As we annually recognize the month of March as Social Work month, first, it is important to acknowledge the public. Authentically, there will be no social work profession without the people and public that we serve. This past season our board has been able to address many issues that will impact the future of regulation and our public. Although long and extensive, our board has successfully been able to move through the rules promulgation process with the intention of fully promulgating 70 rules by the Fall of 2025. Rules ranging from Emeritus status for retired social workers to telesupervision for electronic interactive supervision between licensed social workers all while reducing barriers to practice with intention to increase accessibility to professional licensed social workers.

We continue to make advancements in technology through the design of a new licensing platform designed by Covalent. We positioned ourselves for our leadership to serve on the Executive Committee for the Council of State Governments: Social Work Interstate Compact increasing visibility of Louisiana as an innovator in social work practice. We continue to maintain the retention of our office staff under strong executive administration. As we have strengthened our abilities to work on pressing matters, we continued to ensure that the public stayed informed and that their voices were heard during the process of our decision making. From public comments during our board meetings, written public comments, public hearings, accessibility to our staff, notifications of board information via website, e-mails, and social media, our actions and activities were all done by keeping the public at the forefront. During our recent strategic planning meeting, we acknowledged the significance of our front-facing image to the public and prioritized the importance of branding.

*Continued on page 3*

## IN THIS ISSUE:

From the Chair | Congratulations Evan Bergeron | CE & Renewal Info  
Welcome Jamar Ennis | Open Meetings Law & Public Comments | Other Notable News

**BOARD MEMBERS**

## Congratulations Evan!

## Well Deserved!



Evan Bergeron was sworn in to practice law before the Supreme Court of the United States in January in Washington, DC. As a member of the Supreme Court Bar, he joins a small and elite group of attorneys nationally with the privilege of practicing law at the Supreme Court. He took his oath of office at the beginning of a Court session with all nine Justices present.

Evan served as the Consumer Member of the LASBWE since 2018 and as Chair of the Rules Committee. The board is excited for Evan as he embarks on his next chapter. He is a Founding Partner of Winston Bergeron, LLP law firm in New Orleans where he focuses his practice on appeals, civil rights, commercial litigation, and election law. Evan is also an Adjunct Professor and the Director of the Advocacy Center at the Loyola University New Orleans College of Law where he teaches appellate advocacy. He devotes his spare time to advancing the rights and representation of the LGBTQ+ community through the National LGBTQ Victory Fund Campaign Board, the LGBTQ Committee of the New Orleans Bar Association, and the New Orleans Pride Center. Evan lives in New Orleans with his rescue bull terrier mix, Marshall.

The board is excited for Evan as he embarks on his next chapter and wishes him continued success. Without a doubt, he will make a positive difference wherever his journey takes him. Thank you Evan!

## Continuing Education & Renewal

- ✓ The current collection period started September 1, 2024 and ends August 31, 2025.
- ✓ There is no carry-over of hours or “swing” month.
- ✓ Under the current rules in-person continuing education means that the presenter and the attendee are at the same location. All social workers are required to have at least 10 in-person continuing education hours.
- ✓ Renewal will open after June 1, 2025. Notice that it is time to renew will be emailed and mailed.
- ✓ Maintain copies of your continuing education documentation as we anticipate renewal this year to be under the new licensing platform.

# LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS



## WELCOME JAMAR ENNIS, ESQ. LABSWE CONSUMER MEMBER



On March 14, 2025, Governor Jeff Landry appointed Jamar Lanier Ennis to LABSWE to serve in the position of Consumer Member.

Governor Landry appointed Jamar to serve as the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs in 2024.

Jamar, a native from North Baton Rouge, attended Redemptorist High School, and has the distinction of earning degrees from Baton Rouge Community College, Louisiana State University, and Southern University Law Center. He is also a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., (Nu Psi Chapter, LSU), the Baton Rouge Community College Alumni Association.

During his two decades in public service, Jamar has served as Executive Director of the Louisiana Youth for Excellence (LYFE), and as the Executive Director of the Statewide Independent Living Council. In 2024, Jamar was appointed by the Governor to serve on the following State Commissioned Boards: Louisiana ABLE Account Advisory Board, the Louisiana Special School District (SSD), the Governor's Advisory Council of Disability Affairs (GACDA), Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, Louisiana Voting Systems Commission, and Louisiana Commission for the Deaf.

Jamar is also a licensed attorney in the State of Louisiana and has experience practicing in both state and federal courts.

### *Continuation from Cover*

The adage for the Louisiana State Board of Social Workers that was adopted is: **PUBLIC...PROTECTION...PROFESSION: Protecting the Public and Upholding the Integrity of the Profession.** We believe that this captures the purpose of the board and is in full alignment with its existence. Moving forward, this brand will be printed on all LABSWE front-facing public communication.

Our board is comprised of licensed social workers representing each licensing credential. One of its members is not a social work representative. The consumer member, formerly titled "public" member is an appointed member of the public who is not a licensed social worker. The consumer member offers another perspective of the impact of social work practice on the public and helps the board view regulation from a lens other than that of a social worker. The perspective of the consumer (public) member offers a balance to the board's regulatory authority and continues to provide the necessary voice to assist with efficiency and more importantly efficacy in social work practice in the state of Louisiana. Our board wishes to recognize our former consumer member Evan J. Bergeron, Esq. for his years of service and his recent accomplishment for being sworn in to practice law before the Supreme Court of the United States this past January in Washington, DC. His dedication, leadership, and expertise has played a crucial role as the chair of our Rules Committee and as a board member for 7 years. With this, we welcome our newly appointed Consumer Member Jamar Ennis, Esq. With a Juris Doctorate and years of experience, Jamar brings a wealth of expertise in policy, advocacy, administration, and executive leadership as a systems change agent. We look forward to his contribution as a board member. As we forge ahead with the purpose of protecting the public, we believe that we will continue to do so by ensuring the inclusion of the public perspective and experience. Thank you Public for your perspective.

Happy Social Work Month,

*Dr. Hy*

*"Just because you are doesn't mean you UNDERSTAND. Just because you're not doesn't mean that you don't understand"---Author Unknown*

## Louisiana Open Meetings Law and Public Comments

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The Louisiana Open Meetings Law (also known as the “Sunshine Law”) applies to licensing boards in the state, as they are considered public bodies that make decisions impacting the public. These boards must follow the provisions set forth by the law to ensure transparency and public access to their meetings. Here’s how the Open Meetings Law affects licensing boards:

### 1. Public Access to Meetings

- Licensing boards in Louisiana, like other public agencies, are required to hold open meetings that are open to the public, meaning any interested person has the right to attend.
- They must give public notice of their meetings in advance, usually at least 24 hours prior to the meeting, including the time, date, location, and agenda items to be discussed.

### 2. Agenda and Notice Requirements

- Licensing boards must post a detailed agenda for each meeting, and the agenda must include all items to be discussed or acted upon. This allows the public to know in advance what will be addressed and can prepare or voice their opinions.
- The notice of the meeting must be posted in a public place, such as a website or at the board office, and must be accessible to the public. In some cases, notice may also need to be sent to media outlets.

### 3. Executive Sessions

- Licensing boards are allowed to hold closed executive sessions in certain circumstances. Some examples include:
  - Discussion of the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of a person.
  - Strategy sessions or negotiations with respect to collective bargaining, prospective litigation after formal written demand, or litigation when an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body.
  - Discussion regarding the report, development, or course of action regarding security personnel, plans, or devices, including discussions concerning cybersecurity plans, financial security procedures, and assessment and implementation of any such plans or procedures.
  - Investigative proceedings regarding allegations of misconduct.

### 4. Minutes of Meetings

- Like other public bodies, licensing boards are required to keep minutes of their meetings. The minutes of a meeting are approved at the next regularly scheduled meeting and are posted on the board’s website or otherwise made available for public inspection.
- The minutes must reflect the decisions made and any actions taken during the meeting.

### 5. Public Participation

- Licensing boards must allow for at least one public comment period at any point prior to action on an agenda item upon which a vote is to be taken. This allows individuals or organizations to provide input, raise concerns, or give feedback on agenda items.
- Licensing boards may adopt reasonable rules and restrictions regarding such a comment period.

### 6. Transparency and Accountability

- The Open Meetings Law ensures that licensing boards make their decision-making process transparent and accessible. This is particularly important since many licensing boards make decisions that directly affect professionals in fields like medicine, law, accounting, engineering, and other regulated industries.
- It also ensures that the public has a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the actions of the licensing board, ensuring accountability for any actions that may affect the licensed professionals and the public.

### 7. Penalties for Non-Compliance

- If a licensing board violates the Open Meetings Law, decisions made during that meeting could be voided. If any decisions are made in a meeting where the Open Meetings Law was not followed (such as holding an unannounced or closed meeting when it shouldn’t have been), those decisions may be challenged in court.

### 8. Special Meetings

- If a licensing board needs to hold a special meeting (outside of its regular meeting schedule), it must still provide the required 24-hour public notice with the agenda.
- In emergency situations, the law allows for shorter notice, but even then, there are strict rules about public access and transparency.

# LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS

## **The Pros and Cons of Public Comments at Board Meetings**

Public comments at board meetings are an essential part of the democratic process, allowing licensees, community members, employees, and other stakeholders to voice their concerns, suggestions, or support for decisions being made by the board. While the inclusion of public commentary promotes transparency and accountability, it also presents some challenges. Here's a breakdown of the pros and cons of public comments during board meetings.

### **Pros of Public Comments at Board Meetings**

**1. Encourages Transparency and Accountability** One of the main advantages of public comment sessions is that they hold board members accountable for their decisions. When members of the public are allowed to speak on an agenda item in which the board will take action, it ensures that the decision-making process is not conducted behind closed doors. It gives community members insight into how decisions are made and ensures that board members consider the input of the people who will be directly affected by those decisions.

**2. Promotes Engagement** Public comment periods allow individuals to actively participate in local governance, making them feel more connected and invested in the decision-making process. This engagement can lead to higher levels of involvement, whether that's attending future meetings, volunteering, or serving on the board.

**3. Diverse Perspectives and Feedback** When people from various backgrounds, industries, and viewpoints are given the floor, it can help broaden the board's understanding of an issue. Board members can learn about the concerns or needs of different groups that may not have been considered, potentially leading to better, more inclusive decision-making.

### **Cons of Public Comments at Board Meetings**

**1. Time-Consuming** One of the most common criticisms of public comment periods is that they can be time-consuming. If many people wish to speak, the meeting can run long, potentially delaying the board's agenda. This can lead to fatigue among board members and audience members alike, especially if the commentary is repetitive or off-topic. Managing the time allocation for speakers becomes crucial in ensuring the meeting remains productive.

**2. Potential for Disruptions or Negative Behavior** While public comments are intended to be civil, they can sometimes devolve into personal attacks, rants, or inappropriate behavior. In some cases, speakers may use the forum to vent frustrations, which can disrupt the meeting and create an uncomfortable environment. Such disruptions can also divert attention from the issues at hand and hinder productive discussion.

**3. Emotional or Uninformed Comments** Not all public

comments are based on facts or informed opinions. Some speakers may provide emotional responses or misunderstand the issues, which can lead to the spread of misinformation. While these comments might be heartfelt, they may not always add value to the discussion or contribute to sound decision-making.

**4. Risk of Overrepresentation of Vocal Minority** A small but vocal group of individuals can dominate the public comment period, even if their concerns don't represent the majority view of the community. If not properly managed, the public comment section can lead to disproportionate influence from a minority of participants, leaving the views of the broader community underrepresented. Ensuring that diverse opinions are heard requires careful facilitation by the board's chairperson.

**5. Potential for Delayed Decision-Making** The public comment process can sometimes lead to indecision or hesitation on the part of the board. If board members are swayed too much by public opinion, they may delay their decisions or become overly cautious, resulting in a lack of timely action. While it's important to consider public input, boards need to balance it with their role as decision-makers who are tasked with analyzing issues and taking action in the best interest of the public and within the authority of Louisiana law.

The Louisiana Open Meetings Law ensures that licensing boards operate in a transparent manner and that their meetings are open to the public. It allows for public scrutiny, participation, and accountability in the actions of these boards. The law does allow for some exceptions, such as executive sessions for certain sensitive matters, but it generally emphasizes openness and public access to governmental decision-making processes.

Public comments at board meetings play a critical role in fostering a democratic process and ensuring that the voices of community members are heard. They provide transparency, promote engagement, and contribute diverse perspectives that can improve decision-making. However, challenges like time constraints, disruptions, and the potential for unproductive or emotional comments highlight the need for careful management of these sessions. Balancing public input and the authority set forth by the Louisiana Social Work Practice Act and the Occupational Standards is essential for sound decision-making while maintaining a positive and productive environment for all involved.

## Other Notable **NEWS...**

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- Dr. Hyacinth McKee, Chair was elected as Member-at-Large of the Executive Committee for the Social Work Interstate Compact and appointed to serve as Chair of the Rules Committee for the Social Work Interstate Compact.
- LABSWE Licensing Analyst Sara Banks was present at the NASW-LA Annual Conference as an exhibitor.
- LABSWE Administrator Emily DeAngelo and Lisa Lipsey, LCSW-BACS presented “The Law, Ethics, and Your Social Work Practice” at the NASW-LA Chapter Annual Conference.

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## DID YOU KNOW?

**LABSWE has a Facebook page.**  
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