



## From the lens of mobility, we see providence, perils, and progress



M. Jenise Comer, LCSW, MSW, ACSW  
ASWB President

The 2013 Board of Directors demonstrated foresight by including “Mobility in Our Lifetime” in the 2014–2018 Strategic Plan. We had no idea at the time that other health care professions would also be engaged in achieving the challenge of mobility today. We were convinced that this is a workforce issue rooted in the value of competent practice to protect the public. Mobility Task Force co-chair Dorinda Noble added the trend of increased mobility observed in millennials. Above all, we knew that once a professional had been determined “competent” by satisfying a jurisdiction’s licensing requirements, that professional remained competent, even when he or she moved to a different jurisdiction. Years of practice without discipline, supported by continuing education aimed at “continuing competency,” should confirm the designation of competence.

Additional factors, including the use of technology in practice and the need for increased access to health care, affirmed the importance of achieving the goal of mobility and portability to enhance ASWB’s mission of service to member boards to protect the public. We knew it was an ambitious undertaking. We worked

deliberately and strategically to study the issue, identify our needs and resources, and to include input from constituents and member boards. The Mobility Task Force planned a strategy that respects states’ rights to regulate the licensed practice of social workers.

At the Spring Education Meeting in St. Louis in 2014, I stated that we must achieve Mobility, or the issue will be imposed on us by our legislators. Today, the state of regulation faces many threats. Contrary to our mission of public protection, the Federal Trade Commission is focused on addressing another side of regulation. Following the North Carolina dental board decision, the spotlight is now on “restraint of trade,” “barriers to entry to work,” and “promoting competition.” While these are important considerations, they should not drive a “deregulation” agenda while “public protection” is placed in the shadows. The need for competent practice and public protection must remain at the center of ASWB’s Mobility Strategy. This is even more critical when working with vulnerable populations and marginalized communities, who are often the clients social workers serve.

I am energized by the progress the Mobility Task Force and staff have

made. There is a consensus among our member boards that we need mobility and portability. As with most situations, the challenge is around how to achieve it. All agree a strategy should be simple and avoid opening state statutes. Our strategy focuses on licensed social workers only, who want to move to or practice in additional jurisdictions. The success of the ASWB Mobility Strategy is dependent upon the acceptance and participation of ASWB member boards.

A Mobility Resolution will be voted on at the Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly in November. The resolution simply asks that each ASWB member board agree to:

1. Review applicable statutes, rules/regulation, and policies related to accepting the Standards outlined in the attached Mobility Strategy
2. Review applicable statutes, rules/regulation, and policies related to accepting the primary source data verified by ASWB staff and maintained in the secure centralized databank

3. Identify any barriers or restrictions in the jurisdiction's statutes, rules/regulation, and policies related to accepting and participating in the ASWB Mobility Strategy
4. Identify the benefits to accepting and participating in the ASWB Mobility Strategy

ASWB is ready to assist any member board with conducting the requested research.

ASWB is US... YOU ARE US. We ARE making progress. I ask that you vote Yes to adopt the Mobility Resolution. ARE YOU with US?