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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Disability Advocates Caution Texas Leadership against Perpetuating Misinformation about Mental Health in their Responses to the Uvalde Shooting

June 1, 2022 (Austin, Texas)—As the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD) mourns for the lives lost in the tragedy that struck Robb Elementary on May 24, 2022, we offer our deepest condolences to the families affected by this senseless violence and stand with the entire community of Uvalde, Texas as they grapple with impossible grief and endless questions.

It is human nature to try to make sense out of the senseless events that have rocked this small, close knit Texas town, and the nation as a whole. As information continues to pour in from authorities and media, we recognize that people want to quickly attach answers to their lingering questions, and in doing so speculate about the “why.” Over the last week, many Texas leaders have rushed to point to mental illness, and we cannot afford to accept this misleading assumption as fact.

As a leading disability advocacy organization in the state, we have a responsibility to caution against the spread of misinformation that may lead to harmful conclusions about people with disabilities, most notably those individuals experiencing mental illness. We reject the assumption that people experiencing mental illness are inherently violent and more likely to commit these unthinkable acts. On the contrary, the facts are clear: [people experiencing mental illness are 10 times more likely to be victims of violence](#) than to be the perpetrators. We ask our leaders to reach out to disability and mental health experts to educate themselves on these topics before sharing misinformation.

The dangerous rhetoric spreading through information channels right now about mental illness will only undo the progress we have made as a state and nation to destigmatize mental illness, and may discourage people from seeking treatment. We also run the risk of subjecting people with mental illness to damaging mischaracterizations that could put their own safety at risk. As we grieve as a nation, we also acknowledge the impact the mass shooting may have on our own mental health, triggering anxiety, depression, and past trauma. We encourage Americans to seek out resources in their communities to support their own mental wellness.

CTD supports changes to public policy and practice that will prevent future mass killings. Part of that change should be to repair our disintegrating social safety net and intervene before such events occur. Changes based on unwarranted discrimination against people with disabilities is not the answer to preventing another tragedy. CTD urges lawmakers and other public figures to broaden the conversation to identify the root cause of these horrific events and prevent another loss of life.

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About CTD

Founded in 1978, CTD is the largest and oldest member-driven cross disability organization in the state. We focus on state-level governmental advocacy, professional disability consulting, consumer direction, and public awareness activities (primarily in the arts) to make Texas a leader in public policy and culture related to people with disabilities of all ages. Learn more about CTD's work at: www.TXDisabilities.org.