



**Texas Disability Advocates Call on Social Work Board to Protect Rights
*Code of Conduct Review, Attorney General Opinion at Issue***

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AUSTIN, TEXAS—*The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, The Arc of Texas and Disability Rights Texas today released the following statement:*

A jolt in October 2020, then another in June 2021, has left the community of Texans with disabilities no alternative but to speak out against harmful, state-level discrimination. The arena is the Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners (TSBSWE), the board charged with oversight of the social work profession. In October, at the request of the Governor's office, TSBSWE proposed removing from the Code of Conduct the prohibition against discrimination based on disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Facing huge pushback from advocates for the civil rights of the disability and LGBTQ+ communities and social workers themselves, the proposed change was reversed within weeks. But in June 2021, the Texas Attorney General issued a nonbinding opinion on the matter. The Attorney General appears to say that TSBSWE indeed may issue a Code of Conduct removing the prohibition of discrimination based on disability and LGBTQ+ status. The Attorney General also suggests that TSBSWE may not even have the authority to prohibit that same discrimination.

As representatives of over 3 million Texans with disabilities, we stand in solidarity with members of the LGBTQ+ community to reject any attempt to alter the Social Work Code of Conduct to remove protections for our fellow Texans. According to the National Association of Social Workers-Texas Chapter, forfeiting the protections would prevent TSBSWE from taking disciplinary action against a social work professional for discriminating against a person with a disability. Instead, a person with a disability would need to utilize the court system to seek redress before the TSBSWE could act, resulting in a year(s) long process during which the social worker would remain in practice. Removing these protections could result in a devastating chilling effect on people in crisis seeking the help of a social work professional.

The measure of a person can best be judged by what actions they take when there is a choice to be made. The appointed members of TSBSWE are Brian C. Brumley, Katie Andrade, Megan Marie Graham, Audrey Ramsbacher, Asia Rodgers, Ben W. Morris, Dolores Saenz-Davila and Jennifer Swords. The AG opinion is nonbinding. We call on the TSBSWE to preserve the current Social Work Code of Conduct.