



TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH

SENFRONIA THOMPSON
Chair

JOHN WRAY
Vice-Chair

October 19, 2020

Darrel D. Spinks
Executive Director
Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council

Gloria Canseco
Presiding Officer
Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council

Timothy Brown
Presiding Officer
Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners

[Sent electronically]

Dear Mr. Spinks, Ms. Canseco and Mr. Brown:

It has come to my attention that the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council (BHEC) and the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners (TSBSWE) voted favorably on a rule that altered the Social Work Code of Conduct which removed protections for persons with disabilities and LGBTQ+ individuals seeking social work services.

I served on the Sunset Commission, advocated for the creation of the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council and passed the bill (HB 1501) out of my committee so that behavioral and mental health professionals would be expeditiously served and governed by an efficient and ethical state agency. It is shameful to have BHEC and TSBSWE implement discriminatory rule changes, especially late in the hour, ignoring the rulemaking process and blatantly causing irreparable harm to Texans seeking social services.

Social workers are employed in many capacities throughout the State and are often in roles that serve vulnerable Texans at risk of or who have already experienced significant adversities. Persons with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ+ communities across the state of Texas are no exception to experiencing discrimination, bullying, adverse health outcomes, mental health and substance abuse issues and suicide.



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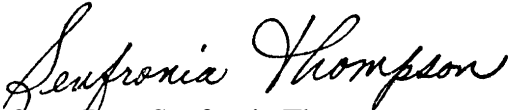
Permitting social workers to refuse services to vulnerable Texans because of personal or political beliefs equates to promoting systemic discrimination and is absolutely unacceptable.

Furthermore, social work professionals who abide by the NASW Code of Ethics which includes "sexual orientation" "gender identity or expression" and "mental or physical ability," deserve to have a Texas Code of Conduct that is aligned with its national professional standards for practicing social work.

In the era of COVID-19 where there are a greater number of adversities and sufferings experienced by Texans, and when the state was already suffering from a greater need for mental health services, I strongly recommend that you reverse this discriminatory rule change and follow the proper process to allow social work professionals and the broader public to comment.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


State Rep. Senfronia Thompson
Chair