

October 19, 2020

Ms. Gloria Canseco, Presiding Officer
Mr. Darrel D. Spinks, Executive Director
Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council
333 Guadalupe St., Ste. 3-900
Austin, TX 78701

Via email to General@bhec.texas.gov

Dear Ms. Canseco and Mr. Spinks,

We write to you over our deep objection to the action of your council and the State Board of Social Work Examiners to strip protections for LGBTQ citizens and people with disabilities from the social work code of conduct.

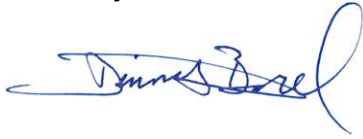
The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities is the state's oldest and largest cross-disability advocacy organization founded and controlled by people with disabilities.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest organization of professional social workers in the world, with over 5,000 members in Texas. NASW is committed to advancing professional social work practice and the profession; promoting human rights, social and economic justice, and unimpeded access to services for everyone.

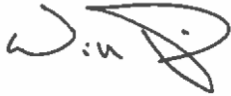
Apart from the lack of solicitation for public comment and public awareness of the action, we are stunned that a body charged with behavioral health regulations would fail to consider that individuals with mental health diagnoses, a major part of the social work clientele, are themselves people with disabilities. We further reject the rationale that prohibitions on discrimination against our disability community are redundant as protections are available through other avenues. While the changes were justified as simply aligning the social work Code of Conduct with statute, Chapter 505 of the Occupations Code clearly grants the licensing board the right to propose and adopt rules that cover "the scope of practice of and standards of care and ethical practice for social work." Extending protections to the disability and LGBTQ communities clearly fall under this area, and therefore the board was well within its rights to define what groups should be protected under its Code of Conduct.

You can resolve this at your meeting on October 27. We ask you to repeal your action of October 12 that singled out people with disabilities and LGBTQ folks for removal from discrimination prohibitions. Second, we ask the Council/Board to approve a Statement of Principle rejecting discrimination of any kind in all areas of your purview.

Sincerely,



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