



The Senate of The State of Texas

Senator José Menéndez

District 26

October 15, 2020

Governor Abbott
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Presiding Officer Gloria Canseco
Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council
333 Guadalupe St., Ste. 3-900
Austin, Texas 78701

Presiding Officer Timothy Brown
Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners
333 Guadalupe St., Ste. 3-900
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Governor Abbot, Presiding Officer Canseco and Presiding Officer Brown,

I am writing today to express my concern about the Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners vote to change its code of conduct which establishes when a social worker may refuse to serve someone. The newly adopted code would no longer prohibit social workers from turning away clients on the basis of disability, sexual orientation and gender identity. This change is on its face discriminatory and will prevent some of our most vulnerable Texans to access the proper and needed mental health care that social workers provide.

In a study done by the United States Health Resources and Services Administration, officials found that more than 100 Texas counties have a shortage of social workers and other mental health professionals. This change will continue to limit the work of these individuals and especially impact LGBTQIA clients' access to mental health services. LGBTQIA community are at risk for high trauma and taking away their access to mental health services with detrimentally impact these individuals as they are seeking assistance. A lack of providers combined with the license to discriminate, not only leads to bad outcomes, but tragic consequences for members of the LGBTQIA community.

CAPITOL OFFICE:

P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711
(512) 463-0126
Fax: (512)-463-2114
1-888-279-0648

E-MAIL: jose.menendez@senate.state.tx.us

Chairman Senate Hispanic Caucus
Committees: Administration • Business & Commerce • Higher Education
Intergovernmental Relations • Redistricting • Veterans Affairs & Border Security

DISTRICT OFFICE:

4522 Fredericksburg Rd., Ste. A-22
San Antonio, Texas 78201
(210) 733-6604
Fax: (210) 733-6605



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Medical professional should not be allowed to discriminate a person based on who they are. This profession is at its core, meant to help and provide care to those who need it most – not to blatantly discriminate, especially in regard to a person's mental health. I am urging the board to reconsider this change in the code of conduct and restore the original code which provided protections for the LGBTQIA community and individuals with disabilities. I am also urging the board to follow the proper processes and take public comments before an adoption of rules, which did not occur during this change. When it comes to the health of any Texan, we should be prioritizing their needs, not encouraging discrimination nor intolerance toward any community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jose Menendez".

State Senator José Menéndez
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