



October 17, 2020

Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council
333 Guadalupe St. Tower 3, Room900
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Esteemed Members of the Council,

It is our hope that this letter can somehow appeal to your respect for human dignity, especially during a global pandemic. As a country, we have endured so much loss, pain, and suffering, where 8.09 million Americans have contracted the deadly *corona virus*. Even more devastating, is the reported number of *Covid* related deaths (“217,000”) in the United States alone (“*The New York Times*,” 2020). In the spirit of saving lives and reducing the potential for harm, we humbly ask that you please reconsider your recent and sudden decision to redact language from our state’s established “Code of Conduct,” (Rule §781.201) guaranteeing protections for individuals and communities that fall under “disabilities,” “sexual orientation,” “gender identity,” and “gender expression.”

As healthcare professionals and experts within your respective fields, there is no need to explain just how critical this decision is for the social work community, but more so, for the populations affected. Not only are you denying the existence of these marginalized and vulnerable populations, but you have single-handedly jeopardized the core values and ethics of Texas social work professionals, students, and retirees by dismantling the National Association of Social Workers “Code of Ethics.”

Furthermore, our transgender-led non-profit organization, Texas Transgender Nondiscrimination Scholars (TXTNS), has been challenging anti-discrimination policies within institutions of higher learning and school board systems across Texas since 2009. Through collaborative efforts with some of Texas’ most-reputable universities, we have successfully advocated for policy changes in over 35 institutions, to include protections for gender and sexual diverse individuals. It is disheartening to learn that our state’s most dedicated mental health experts have essentially taken us back twenty to thirty years of painstaking action to further LGBTQIA and disability rights. We ask that you please reconsider your decision and reinstate protections for these populations that have been easily discarded by your brash decision to deny them the dignity and respect deserving of all people. You have the ability and power to help the powerless and make this right. We thank each of you for your dedicated service, as well as for your time and undivided attention. Lastly, TXTNS welcomes any opportunity to help in any way that we can be of service.

Sincerely,

Josephine Tittsworth, LMSW
Executive Director, Texas Transgender Nondiscrimination Scholars

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