Advocacy Alert

Keep The Texas Social Work Code of Conduct Intact

Don't Mess with Texas Social Workers.

#StandWithTXSocialWorkers

The advocacy fight to keep anti-discrimination language in the Social Work Code of Conduct continues and we need YOUR help!

Background

Social work voices across the state and nation helped the Behavioral Health Executive Council (BHEC) retain anti-discrimination language regarding disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression in the Social Work Code of Conduct in October 2020. Now, the fight continues after the Texas Attorney General issued a nonbinding legal opinion on June 14, 2021 that states the Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners (TSBSWE) may not adopt a Code of Conduct more expansive than the non-discrimination clause currently in our statute. This strips protections for disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression and destroys the statutory authority of TSBSWE to set the ethical standards for the profession. [Read our TALKING POINTS.](#)

What Can I Do?

We need as many voices as we can get to ask TSBSWE to adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics and maintain anti-discrimination language in the Code of Conduct.

It is vital that we show TSBSWE that social workers will not stand for changes to the Code of Conduct by the Governor of Texas!

We need your advocacy in this fight. [Check out our advocacy page](#) for more background info, additional resources, and letters from various legislators and other groups to give you a brief overview of the background on the issue and our advocacy strategy.
**Action Steps:**

1. **Share your story** at the [virtual TSBSWE meeting](#) on Friday, July 9th at 9 am CST. (details below)

2. **Send an email** to the [Governor](#) and [your legislators](#) asking them to support the TSBSWE and the current anti-discrimination language in the Code of Conduct.

3. **Show support on social media!** Use #StandWithTXSocialWorkers and say you want to keep the anti-discrimination language in the Social Work Code of Conduct and ask others to support us too. Out-of-state supporters can [sign our pledge](#).

4. **Join our Stand with TX Social Workers Press Conference** on July 7th from 2-3:30 pm CST on [Facebook Live](#) to see legislative champions and advocates stand up for social workers. Live tweet during the press conference with the #StandWithTXSocialWorkers hashtag.

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**Share Your Story with the Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners (TSBSWE)**

On Friday, July 9th, 2021 the Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners (TSBSWE) will hold an open meeting on Zoom to discuss a variety of issues. This is a chance for social workers and others to share their thoughts, perspectives, and feedback on nondiscrimination language within the Social Work Code of Conduct.

The agenda has not been posted yet, but the agenda and Zoom link will be available on the [BHEC website](#). You do not need to pre-register. You can just log into the Zoom meeting at 9 am CST when the meeting starts. We will also send out an additional update closer to the meeting with all the details on how to join and testify.

Although there are some other issues that you may find interesting, there will be a chance for public comment at the end of the meeting.

So what should you expect? It will likely be a long day, as each speaker is allotted three minutes (although it is your choice whether to take all the time or not). If the numbers that we expect to show up are there, then a lot of voices will get a chance to share their thoughts on the maintaining the current nondiscrimination language in the Social Work Code of Conduct.

All sorts of steps could be taken: TSBSWE could keep the nondiscrimination language in the Code of Conduct or could decide to discuss the AG’s opinion for future rule changes. We just don’t know, but that’s why it’s so imperative that anyone in opposition to this change show up and share.

**Here are our suggested talking points** and below are tips to make your testimony stand out:

- **Be Unique:** If NASW/TX released a script and everyone read the exact same thing it would get old really fast. The worst thing that could happen would be for the members of BHEC to tune out, and if everyone is saying the same thing verbatim, there’s a much greater chance of that. Instead of reading the talking points as is, incorporate them into your testimony. We want you to use the talking points linked above, but we included a whole lot for a reason: just grab three or four and leave the rest for others. We hope that all of them are spread out across the speakers and each one is tweaked to your perspective on this issue.
- **Make the Ask Clear:** We want to reassure TSBSWE that they have the statutory authority to set the ethical standards for the profession and so can keep any non-discrimination protections they choose, and that the AG Opinion is non-binding and they do not have to change the Code of Conduct based on its guidance.

- **Use Stories:** What really makes each testimony unique is the social workers that delivers it, as well as the focus on the clients that would be impacted by these changes. Talk about what the NASW Code of Ethics ([English](#) [Spanish](#)) means to you, and why our Code of Conduct needs to maintain the same anti-discrimination protections. Share your perspective on how this issue ties into a client’s right to self-determination. Or what it means to practice in a way where our beliefs don’t take precedence over access to services. Or what it would look like if a client thought that a social worker could turn them away. If you have a personal connection to the specific language being removed (disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression) feel free to share that, depending on your level of comfort. Connect with the members of TSBSWE on a human level by letting them know there are real implications to both providers and clients should these protections be removed.

- **Use Stats:** On the talking points we’ve included links to various sites with a variety of statistics on the vulnerability of these populations. This information can help drive home just how vital these protections are. One of my personal recs is hook with a story and then drive home the data. I found in my time at the Capitol that by leading with a story about people I could tap into the emotional response of my audience, and that often made the rational connection through the data more impactful. But this is your testimony, so craft it as you see fit.

- **Try Not to Repeat:** If you do hear someone else share similar testimony you can always keep it short and say you agree with so-and-so speaker, or change your own testimony to take a different path. Make it stand out and you will make it more memorable.

- **Be From Texas (or licensed here):** Virtual meetings make it easy for anyone to come and testify. But if you are a social worker and not licensed in Texas, or an advocate from someplace else, we ask that you not speak. Save this space for social workers and advocates who have that connection to this state, as external voices could dilute the message. Don’t Mess With Texas isn’t just an anti-littering campaign, it’s a culture this state projects, and you can show your support by signing our [Stand with Texas Social Workers pledge](#) and still letting those in the state speak up.

Those are the highlights, but if you have questions you can reach out to me, the Executive Director of NASW/TX [wfrancis.naswtx@socialworkers.org](mailto:wfrancis.naswtx@socialworkers.org) or Alison Mohr Boleware, the Government Relations Director [aboleware.naswtx@socialworkers.org](mailto:aboleware.naswtx@socialworkers.org) and we will try and help.

If you’re a member of NASW, thank you! Your input and energy have helped fuel this fight. If you’re not, then please know that we’ll be working with our legislative partners on anti-discrimination legislation during the special session, and members make that possible. You can always [join here](#) to receive the latest updates and participate in many different ways. See you on July 9th.