

SWAD LGBTQ+ Legislative Awareness and Advocacy

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SOGIE Committee Overview and Mission

The NASW-TX Equity Committees provide advice and consultation to the chapter board of directors via the Executive Director, to enhance social workers' capacity to support human rights for all Texans. The SOGIE Committee is particularly focused on promoting policies, laws, and programs that affirm, support, and value sexual orientation, gender identity and expression among individuals, families, and communities. Embracing the values and ethics of our profession, the committee serves as an advocacy, educational, and advisory group to end all forms of discrimination based on homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism in all social institutions and the public and private sectors.

Key items:

- Bills which the SOGIE Committee supports
- Bills which the SOGIE Committee opposes
- 88th Legislature committees of influence
- Taking action
- Local/State/National resources
- Texas SOGIE centers

88th Texas Legislative Session

The state of Texas Legislative Session is a biannual occurrence. This year, pre-filing began November 14, 2022. The 88th Legislature convened January 10, 2023, and the regular session ends May 29, 2023.

The issue

There are currently over 70 bills introduced which work against equity and civil rights for the LGBTQ+ community.

Why is this important?

Each legislative session a large volume of bills is introduced which focus on criminalization of LGBTQ+ lives. This 2023 session is no exception, with specific focus being placed on transgender youth, families and providers of transgender youth, and the art of Drag. The lives of LGBTQ+ Texans continue to be used as a pawn for advancing right-wing conservative ideologies with no regard for documented medical and mental health best practices, expert testimony, individual and community trauma, factually accurate K-12 education, or the well-being of the real human beings who are impacted.

"Texas's legal landscape and social climate put LGBT residents at risk of discrimination and harassment" (Williams Institute, 2017). The impact is far reaching, ranging from mental health disparities, increased rates of suicide, as well as increased risk of poverty and overall distress.

30%

OF LGBTQ+ TEXANS
are diagnosed with
a depressive disorder

Compared to 17% of
non-LGBTQ+ Texans
(Williams Institute, 2017)

68%

**of LGBTQ youth in
Texas reported not
having access to
mental health care.**

(Trevor Project, 2022)

**47% of LGBTQ youth in
Texas seriously considered
suicide in 2021, including
56% of transgender
and nonbinary youth.**

(Trevor Project, 2022)

Spotlight Bills

The table below highlights six bills which the NASW-TX SOGIE Committee opposes, as well as six bills which the Committee supports.

Bill Number	Sponsor(s)	Bill Summary	Position	Rationale for Position
SB 82 ; SB 111 ; HB 970	Johnson; Menéndez; Zwiener	Relating to the repeal of statutes regarding the criminality or unacceptability of “homosexual conduct” and to the recognition of certain same-sex relationship statuses.	For	These bills would repeal antiquated statutes surrounding sexual orientation and same-sex relationships. While these statutes are largely unenforced because of measures at the federal level, they serve as symbols of stigma and institutional discrimination.
SB 212	Eckhardt	Relating to the prosecution of the criminal offense of sexual assault. *Criminalizes conversion therapy.	For	This bill would criminalize conversion therapy in the context of abuse/assault of a sexual nature.
SB 110 ; HB 1012	Menéndez; González	Relating to the prohibition of certain discrimination	For	These bills provide amendment to the labor code adding sexual orientation and gender identity to the protected groups regarding discrimination.
HB 42	Slaton	Relating to the definition of child abuse.	Oppose	Defines gender-affirming care as child abuse and prohibits Medicaid and mental health providers from delivering care.
HB 436	Patterson	Relating to the definition of child abuse.	Oppose	Defines gender-affirming care as child abuse.
HB 672	Hefner	Relating to the definition of child abuse and the prosecution of the criminal offense of abandoning or endangering a child.	Oppose	Defines child abuse to include providing gender-affirming care and hormone therapy.
HB 1686	Oliverson	Relating to prohibitions on the provision to certain children of procedures and treatments for gender transitioning, gender reassignment, or gender dysphoria and on the use of public money or public assistance to provide those procedures and treatments.	Oppose	Prohibits Medicaid funds from being used for gender affirming care for people under 18 yrs and prohibits the use of hormones and puberty blockers. Medical providers may have criminal charges and revocation of license.
HB 319	Oliverson	Relating to protection of persons from participation in a health care service for reasons of conscience; providing a civil remedy; authorizing disciplinary action.	Oppose	Allows providers/entities to deny service and/or care based on religious or “moral” views, with provision for immediate emergency. This could allow open discrimination, and allow bias to dictate the definition of “emergency”
SB 476	Hughes	Relating to the definition of sexually oriented business.	Oppose	This bill would mandate that any business which houses any drag performance be registered as a sexually oriented business.

Resource: Using the links below you can search for specific bills, committees or issue areas, filter by keyword, track legislation, and more!

Equality Texas: <https://www.equalitytexas.org/legislature/legislative-bill-tracker-2023/>

Texas Legislature: <https://capitol.texas.gov/>

Committees of Influence

The table below highlights five committees which typically interact with LGBTQ+ focused legislation. Many bills have already received their committee assignment. Is your representative listed?

Committee	Chair	Vice Chair	Seniority Appointments	Speaker Appointments
Public Education	Buckley, Brad	Allen, Alma	Allen, Alma Dutton, Harold V. Jr. King, Ken of Hemphill Longoria, Oscar Schaefer, Matt	Allison, Steve Cunningham, Charles Harris, Cody of Anderson Harrison, Brian Hefner, Cole Hinojosa, Gina Talarico, James
State Affairs	Hunter, Todd	Hernandez, Ana	Geren, Charlie Guillen, Ryan Hunter, Todd Raymond, Richard Peña Smithee, John	Anchía, Rafael Dean, Jay Metcalf, Will Slawson, Shelby Spiller, David Thompson, Senfronia of Harris Turner, Chris
Calendars	Burrows, Dustin	Rose, Toni	None	Cook, David Geren, Charlie Hefner, Cole Hernandez, Ana Johnson, Ann of Harris Patterson, Jared Slawson, Shelby Talarico, James Thompson, Ed of Brazoria
Special Committee on Youth Health & Safety	Senfronia Thompson	Lacy Hull	None	Giovanni Capriglione Harold Dutton Ann Johnson Tracy King Brooks Landgraf J.M. Lozano

Resource: Using the link below you can search for the elected officials which represent your area.

Who Represents Me?

<https://wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home>

Taking Action

In this section you will find opportunities to continue engaging with the 2023 legislative session, as well as guidance to help you get started in advocacy efforts.

Upcoming events of interest for students and practitioners

1. March 8: Transgender Advocacy Day at the Capitol with TENT
2. March 10/June 9/September 8/December 8: DFPS Council Meetings
3. March 20: All in for Equality Advocacy Day at the Texas Capitol
4. March 31: Transgender Day of Visibility
5. October 12-14: 47th Annual NASW Texas State Conference

Your Plan to Advocate

Opportunities for advocacy exist in all domains of our profession. Whether you are a practicing therapist, student, case manager, school social worker, community organizer, hospital social worker, educator, or any other field of social work, what happens at the institutional and systemic level with our legislature impacts how, and if, we are able to engage in our practice ethically.

After today's Social Work Advocacy Day, I plan to take the following actions:

Examples could include: *Write a letter about a policy to my representative.... Track a bill and provide written/oral testimony.... Connect with my local SOGIE Center.... Participate in an upcoming advocacy event.... Contact Committee members to lobby for/against particular legislation.... Communicate with organizational leadership regarding LGBTQ+ equity and inclusion...*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

For tips on social work advocacy, check out the NASW-TX Advocacy Toolkit here: <https://www.naswtx.org/page/Toolkit>

Resources and Information

Local/State/National Resources

- Transgender Education Network of Texas (TENT)
- Equality Texas
- ACLU of Texas
- Gender Infinity
- Texas LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce
- Texas Impact Fund
- Transgender Education Network of Texas
- Texas Trans Youth
- Texas Foster Youth Connections
- WPATH World Professional Association for Transgender Health
- CenterLink - Community of LGBT Centers
- Immigration Equality
- Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality
- KIND – Kids in Need of Defense
- RAICES
- Family Acceptance Project
- Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
- Strong Family Alliance
- Lambda Legal
- The Trevor Project
- Human Rights Campaign
- Fenway Health
- Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
- The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)
- National Center for Transgender Equality
- Somos Familia Valle

Texas SOGIE Centers

Amarillo:

Panhandle Pride: <https://panhandleprideinc.org/>

Austin:

QWELL Foundation: <https://www.austinoutpost.org/>

Out Youth: <https://www.outyouth.org/>

Rainbow Connections: <https://www.rainbowconnectionsatx.org/>

College Station:

Pride Community Center: <https://www.pridecc.org/>

Corpus Christi:

Coastal Bend Pride Center: <https://cbpridecenter.org/>

Dallas:

Resource Center: <https://www.myresourcecenter.org/>

Youth First Texas: <https://www.youthfirsttexas.org/>

Dallas Hope Charities: <https://www.dallashopecharities.org/>

El Paso:

Borderland Rainbow Center: <https://www.borderlandrainbow.org/>

Fort Worth:

LGBTQ Saves: <https://www.lgbtqsaves.org/>

Houston:

The Montrose Center: <https://montrosecenter.org/>

Lubbock:

OUTWest Lubbock: <https://www.outwestlubbock.org/>

McAllen:

Rio Grande Valley Resource List: <http://rgvresource.com/>

Odessa:

Pride Center West Texas: <https://www.pridecenterwt.org/>

San Angelo:

Open Arms Rape Crisis Center & LGBT+ Services: <https://openarmscv.com/>

San Antonio:

Pride Center San Antonio: <https://pridecentersa.org/>

Maven Youth: <https://www.mavenyouth.org/>

Tyler:

Tyler Area Gays: <https://www.tylerareagays.com/>

Wichita Falls:

The Opal Center: <https://www.theopalcenter.org/>

SOGIE Committee Members and Info

Website: https://www.naswtx.org/page/Comm_GLBT

Committee Chair: Kurt W. Oster, LCSW, ACSW, ADHD-CCSP, ASD-CS, CCTP (He/Him/His)

Committee Members:

Jennifer Nichols, LMSW (She/Her/Hers)

Hannah Mitchell, LCSW (She/Her/Hers)

Chris Avila, LCSW-S (They/Them/Theirs)

Kat Moody, BSW (They/Them/Theirs)

Raymond Castilleja, Jr., LCSW-S (He/Him/His)

Ashley Heidebrecht, LMSW (She/Her/Hers)

Mika Smith-Low, LCSW-S (She/Her/Hers)

Natalie Smith-Low, LCSW (She/Her/Hers)

