



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Social Worker Code of Conduct Change is Discriminatory Against Texans with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

**(AUSTIN, TEXAS, 10/20/2020)** The decision last week by the Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners (TSBSWE) to change its code of conduct to allow discrimination against Texans based on their disability, sexual orientation or gender identity is appalling.

“People with disabilities and LGBTQI are often vulnerable to mental health issues, trauma and violence,” says The Arc of Texas Board Member Maggie Suter, an advocate for people with disabilities.

According to data from the National Associations of Councils on Developmental Disabilities, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are three-times more likely to be violently victimized, which includes rape, sexual assault, aggravated assault or robbery. They are also four-to-10 times more likely to be victims of crimes such as abuse, neglect or exploitation. And among all people with IDD, 30% to 35% have a co-occurring psychiatric disability, or dual-diagnosis.

“Social workers do more than just counseling. Many licensed social workers connect Texans to assistance with housing, jobs, food, and healthcare,” says The Arc of Texas CEO Jennifer Martinez. “Texas social workers empower all Texans, especially those with disabilities who need these resources, and allowing unchecked discrimination disavows the principles and practice of social work.”

Take action to let the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council (BHEC), about the danger of this change.

- Sign the Texas Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers petition at <http://chnq.it/FpSWQs9P>
- Testify at the next BHEC hearing on Tuesday, October 27, to express your concerns about this change and urge BHEC to formally adopt rules that extend protections for disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression to all of the boards under their administration, including the TSBSWE. Sign up for updates about the meeting at the bottom of this page: <https://www.bhec.texas.gov/index.html>
- Contact Governor Greg Abbott (<https://gov.texas.gov/contact>) and share your opinion.
- Contact your Texas legislators and share your concerns. Find out who represents you at <https://wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home>.

Along with more than 500,000 Texans with IDD, their families and the social workers who support them, The Arc of Texas urges BHEC to rescind this change. It is dangerous to the health of Texans with disabilities and LGBTQI Texans.