The Honorable Greg Abbott  
Office of the Governor-State of Texas  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, TX 78711-2428

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

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

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

It has come to our attention that the Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners recently changed a rule at their last board meeting on Monday October 12, 2020, which would now allow social workers to deny services to LGBTQIA individuals and individuals with disabilities based on their clients’ status. As members of the Texas Congressional delegation, we find this recent removal of non-discrimination protections terribly misguided and ask for your reconsideration and reversal of this rule immediately.

During this pandemic, social workers have taken on an even larger role in protecting their communities by providing emergency resources, housing and employment services, mental health care, and medical casework to name a few. As more people turn to social workers in their time of need, it is shameful for the state to allow discrimination of any individual trying to get the resources they need. During a pandemic, enforcement and protection of non-discrimination rules should be stronger than ever, to ensure our most vulnerable Texans receive assistance during these unprecedented times. This rule change does the exact opposite.

According to news outlets, this rule change was suggested by the Texas Governor’s office three days before a scheduled Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners meeting. This rule change, with such a tremendous impact on social workers, LGBTQIA individuals, and individuals with disabilities, should not have been rushed. It is also incredibly problematic that this rule was implemented without proper input and feedback from social workers and/or social worker
representatives and advocacy groups, who would be directly affected by this change. In fact, the Executive Director of the Texas chapter of the National Association of Social Workers has called this rule change “incredibly disheartening.”

For these reasons, we request your reconsideration and reversal of this outrageous rule during the next scheduled board meeting on October 27, 2020.

Sincerely,

Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress

Additional cosigners:  
Rep. Veronica Escobar  
Rep. Lloyd Doggett  
Rep. Colin Allred  
Rep. Al Green  
Rep. Henry Cuellar  
Rep. Marc Veasey  
Rep. Vicente Gonzalez  
Rep. Joaquin Castro  
Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee  
Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson