

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 1930

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & CIVIL JURISPRUDENCE

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Hearing Date: April 6, 2021 8:00 AM

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Mary Faithfull, Executive Director

Disability Rights TX

Austin, TX

Justice of the Peace Courts Need to be Transparent with Eviction Information  
Comments in Favor of HB 1930

Disability Rights Texas (DRTx) is Texas' designated Protection and Advocacy (P&A) agency. We provide a wide range of services to ensure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against due to their disability. We also work to make certain that the rights of people with disabilities are enforced, including the right to equal access to programs, services and activities so that they can live as independently and fully as possible.

DRTx works directly with people with disabilities to help them maintain their housing so that people can live independently. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and most recently Winter Storm Uri, we have seen an increase in evictions being filed against our clients with disabilities. However, we are unable to easily track important information regarding eviction cases that would help us better advocate for our clients because Justice of the Peace (JP) courts do not make this information easily accessible. Currently no central database exists for tracking important demographic and legal information at the JP level. Many times, the outcomes and adjudication of cases, the number of cases, and other case information at the JP level is unknown because there is no centralized information clearinghouse.

HB 1930 by Rep. Walle helps promote transparency at the JP courts by allowing for the centralization of data for various housing advocacy organizations to review. Instances have occurred where renters receive default judgments against them in JP courts due to landlords failing to provide adequate notice of hearing. With the database created by HB 1930, housing advocacy organizations can track these sorts of situations and establish patterns that will help us expose bad actors, ensuring that people with disabilities are being fairly treated by their landlords and others involved in their housing. HB 1930 also promotes more government transparency, something that is an essential public good.

HB 1930 will have a positive impact on the people we serve at DRTx. By allowing for more government transparency at the JP courts, housing advocacy organizations will be able to provide better support to people with disabilities facing eviction. Additionally, access to this vital demographic and legal information will help expose those acting in bad faith, and greatly improve housing outcomes for Texans moving forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on these important issues. Please contact Tanya Lavelle with questions at [tlavelle@disabilityrightstx.org](mailto:tlavelle@disabilityrightstx.org)