

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Submitted to the Committee on Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence
For HB 530
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Hearing Date: March 15, 2023 8:00 AM

Sabrina Gonzalez
Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities
Austin, TX
Chairman Leach & Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 530, relating to the terminology used in statute to refer to intellectual disability. My name is Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo, and I am speaking on behalf of the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD), registering on the bill.

TCDD is established by state and federal law and is governed by 27 board members, appointed by the Governor, 60% of whom are individuals with developmental disabilities or family members of individuals with disabilities. The Council's purpose in law is to encourage policy change so that people with disabilities have opportunities to be fully included in their communities and exercise control over their own lives.

Language is a powerful tool that is constantly evolving. The term "mental retardation", although once used as a medical term, is an outdated and derogatory phrase unfit for the 21st century. The R-word in modern times is used as a derogatory slur meant to insult people's intelligence. This usage promotes negative and harmful stereotypes about people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Many organizations and professionals have already shifted away from using the antiquated terminology and replaced it with the appropriate term, "intellectual disability". The medical profession abandoned the outdated phrase by replacing the old phrasing with "intellectual disability" in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). In addition to this, in 2010, Congress passed Rosa's Law, a federal law that ended the use of the R-word in federal health, education, and labor laws. Here in Texas, the Legislature has been slowly replacing references to the word, such as in changes made to the Parks and Wildlife Code with SB 700 (87R) and to portions of the Education Code with HB 965 (86R).

HB 530 would continue these updates to outdated and offensive terminology used in statute and bring it in alignment with current medical and societal standards. Please feel free to contact us for additional information or if we can be of additional service.

Respectfully submitted,
Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo
Public Policy Analyst
Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities