

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on State Affairs
For HB 2858

Compiled on: Thursday, April 20, 2023 1:52 AM

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Hearing Date: April 19, 2023 10:30 AM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

Crystal Goodwin
Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities
Austin, TX

Chair Hunter and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 2858, relating to state and local government disaster preparedness. My name is Crystal Goodwin, I am the Public Health and Disability Integration Specialist for 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.

The Council has adopted the following among its 2023 TCDD Public Policy Priorities:

Emergency Preparedness: Reinforce the state's responsibility for requiring and assisting local jurisdictions to develop and implement public safety plans that include meeting the needs of people with disabilities in all emergencies.

Effective and inclusive emergency planning is essential to ensuring all Texans have equal access to resources during disasters. There is long-standing research (<https://acl.gov/news-and-events/acl-blog/no-one-left-behind-including-older-adults-and-people-disabilities>) that shows that individuals with disabilities are often excluded or not considered during disaster planning, leaving gaps in services for this population. The provisions in HB 2858 to increase inclusive planning at all stages of emergency management, including resiliency planning, will ensure that Texans with disabilities are not left behind.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted gaps in preparedness of individuals with disabilities in Texas. With a lack of inclusive planning, the limited resources in health care settings were left to be distributed by health care providers who were unprepared to delegate while dealing with the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. HB 2858 would require Texas to develop crisis protocols on a state level, giving health care professionals guidance on decision-making during public health disasters or emergency declarations while also protecting individuals with disabilities from inequitable practices (<https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-providers/civil-rights-covid19/index.html#:~:text=NON%2DDISCRIMINATION%20IN%20CRISIS%20STANDARDS%20OF%20CARE&text=As%20set%20forth%20in%20this,funded%20health%20programs%20or%20activities>).

HB 2858 would close current gaps in disaster planning to become more inclusive of all Texans while giving further support to public health professionals in times of disaster or emergency declarations.

Please feel free to contact us for any additional information or if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,
Crystal Goodwin
Public Health and Disability Integration Specialist
Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities