

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Elections
For SB 477

Compiled on: Thursday, May 4, 2023 11:42 PM

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Hearing Date: May 4, 2023 8:00 AM

Debbie Adams
Self - retired
Wimberley, TX

Voters with a disability are more than accommodated.

Klaudia Forgacova
Self / operations manager
Fort Worth, TX

Please support SB 477. All registered voters should be able to vote, and this is a step toward that. It is not right that today, not all locations require accommodations for disabilities. Our laws should require accommodations at every polling place.

Carsyn Collins, Miss.

Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

Austin, TX

Chair Smith & Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 477. My name is Carsyn Collins, and I am writing on behalf of the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD).

Established by state and federal law, TCDD's purpose 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 identified the following among its 2023 Public Policy Priorities:

Voting Access: Ensure Texans with disabilities have equal access to voting by ... developing an online mail-in ballot application process. Issue standardized, accessible information on the rights of voters with disabilities, and establish and enforce accountability measures for non-compliant voting locations.

SB 477 would provide necessary accommodations to Texas voters with disabilities.

Voting Order Prioritization:

People with disabilities that affect mobility and movement can have great difficulty waiting in long lines to vote. Minor accommodations have been allowed in the past, such as holding a person's place in line if they cannot stand for extended periods of time. But these practices require election workers to constantly monitor the line and remember where that person was standing, and they can result in confrontations with other voters. In guaranteeing priority access for voters with mobility impairments, SB 477 would help lower these burdens on election workers by creating a uniform, efficient standard.

Curbside Voting:

Texas currently requires each polling place to provide for voting at the location's entrance or curb if a voter is physically unable to enter without personal assistance or likelihood of injuring the voter's health. However, voters with disabilities too often report being unable to access curbside voting, in part due to a lack of proper signage. SB 477 would require each polling place to reserve two parking spaces for voters unable to enter a polling location, and have the spaces clearly marked for that purpose.

Online Ballots:

Currently, individuals who cannot handwrite or read standard printed text due to Blindness or visual impairments must rely on support from another person to help them fill out their vote-by-mail application. If an individual cannot read the written application, they cannot guarantee it has been filled out correctly. Accessible online forms, as required by SB 477, would allow them to use screen readers and confirm they have filled out their application correctly, offering assurance to these voters and granting them security and dignity.

SB 477 would better ensure equal access for voters with disabilities. As such, TCDD finds the aims of the bill to be consistent with our mission, guiding principles, and policy priorities. Please feel free to contact us for additional information.

Respectfully submitted,

Carsyn Collins

Public Policy Intern

Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

ROBIN BEERMAN

Self Retired Special Ed Teacher
Houston, TX

Voting for this should be a NO brainer: in other words vote for this automatically.

Joy Davis
Pure Justice Action Fund
Houston, TX

We support this bill that will help to accommodate voters with disabilities. There are voters who are unable to stand for long periods of time that could possibly faint. Having a way for these voters to cast their ballot in addition to creating additional parking spaces for them would be beneficial.

Chase Bearden, Deputy Executive Director
Coalition of Texans with disabilities
Austin, TX

Please support SB 477

Bill Sargent, Former Chief Deputy Clerk for Elections, Galveston County
Self
Galveston, TX

I oppose the bill:
The main issue I have with this legislation is requiring two parking spaces for curbside voting.

We have enough difficulty finding polling locations. We need to ensure there is adequate parking for all voters. By mandating two additional spaces be set aside for curbside voting, in addition to the handicapped parking spot that is already required, this could well impact smaller voting locations and disqualify them from being used.

I would prefer to make this a goal, or best practice, without mandating it for all polling locations across the state of Texas.

Susan Burek
Self: I am a Parent and a volunteer advocate for people with disabilities
Austin, TX

PLEASE VOTE YES ON SB 477, which would amend current law related to accommodating voters with a disability.

Current law allows accommodations for voters with disabilities, including prioritizing voters with mobility impairments at polling locations and providing curbside voting. However, these accommodations should be uniform across all polling locations to prevent inconsistent accessibility and potential discrimination.

SB 477 would require that voters with motor disabilities be given priority to cast their ballots before other voters and that a notice of this priority would be posted at each polling place entrance. It also would require the designation of two parking spots for curbside voting at each polling place and require the county clerk's website to include information about procedures and accommodations available for persons with disabilities and an official application form for early voting ballots. These changes would improve accessibility for voters with disabilities.

PLEASE VOTE YES ON SB 477.

Thank you very much.