

**House Committee on Elections
TCDD Comments on HB 22
March 11, 2021**

Chair Cain and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 22. My name is Lauren Gerken, and I am a Public Policy Analyst for the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD).

Established by state and federal law, TCDD is governed by 27 Governor-appointed board members, 60 percent of whom are individuals with developmental disabilities (DD) 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.

TCDD appreciates the committee's commitment to analyzing legislation on voting accessibility in Texas. Voting is one of the most important fundamental rights and acts of independence a person has in the United States. However, many people with disabilities face barriers at the polls that either forces them to rely on others or deters them from voting completely. With this in mind, TCDD adopted "Voting Access" as one of its Public Policy Priorities for the current legislative session.

While HB 22 creates greater access to voting by offering designated parking for voters who cannot ambulate and go into a polling location, TCDD would like to offer the following recommendations for language that will help with implementation and increased access:

- Specify that the two parking spots must be **in addition** to the accessible parking spots at the polling place.
- Require the Secretary of State to post a notice that these parking spaces will be available. This will allow people who are blind or visually impaired to access the information and be aware of the telephone number, so they can request their drivers to read the number aloud upon arrival.
- Require poll workers to be trained on the addition of these parking spots and how they are expected to interact with the individuals using them.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding these recommendations. Please do not hesitate to reach out to TCDD with any questions, or if you would like any additional information.

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