

2023 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

THE COALITION OF TEXANS WITH DISABILITIES

The 88th Texas Legislature slept on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to invest in Texans with disabilities. But CTD and our partners made our own opportunities.



In this report

4 STATE BUDGET

Attendant Wages

Interest Lists

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI)

Dental Benefit

6 VOTING

At the Polls

Mail in Ballots

7 EDUCATION & CHILDCARE

Student Safety

Censorship in the Classroom

Inclusive Childcare

Early Pickups

Vouchers

9 HEALTHCARE & ACCESS TO MEDICATIONS

Medicaid

Consumer Protections

Infusion Prior Authorizations

Biomarkers

Kratom

Medical Cannabis

11 CRIMINAL & YOUTH JUSTICE

State Prisons

County Jails

Youth Justice

13 OTHER PRIORITIES

Cover: A-Corps intern Laurie Truesdell, photo by
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With a \$33 billion operating surplus and another \$27 billion savings in the Rainy Day Fund, advocates for disability services felt 2023 was a once-in-a-lifetime session for Texas to make long-neglected advances. That optimism faded, and many groups saw little or nothing from legislators. Texans with disabilities didn't get all we needed this session, but we came away with more than nothing—a lot more.

CTD gave its all. Our advocacy team worked long and hard, alongside our members, self-advocates, and partners. We had notable successes in budget appropriations, voting rights, and access to medicines, plus victories challenging egregious state-sanctioned practices in school discipline and criminal justice. Other issues were not solved, yet we advanced the conversation on inclusive child care, special education, youth justice, Medicaid waiver interest lists, medical cannabis, and more.

In a session dominated by culture wars, we take pride in these achievements and know that we have laid important ground work for more positive outcomes in 2025.

Below: CTD Executive Director Dennis Borel with Representative Stephanie Klick



2023 BY THE NUMBERS

\$2,188,000,000 moved in state budget

- \$2B community attendants
- \$63M ECI
- \$125M interest lists

32,826 emails sent by
3,037 CTD members to
43 legislators and staffers

590 participants in
11 advocacy education events

57 advocacy partners

37 media hits

18 workgroups and coalitions

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State Budget

As the 2023 Legislature convened, State Comptroller Glenn Hegar released a mind-boggling revenue estimate of \$188 billion, more money than has ever been available for the state biennial budget by far. CTD was among the many voices calling on the Legislature to tap into the surplus to address years of neglect and pressing crises in disability services. Because of the constitutional spending cap, lawmakers would have had to take additional steps to spend this surplus, but it was not impossible to do.

Unfortunately, but perhaps unsurprisingly, they chose to leave much of the surplus on the table. For CTD and many others who saw the budget surplus as a rare opportunity to solve some of the state's most pressing problems, it is impossible to overstate our disappointment.

Even in this context, CTD made important progress on some of our longest-standing priorities, through steadfast advocacy from Executive Director Dennis Borel and Advocacy Director Jolene Sanders..

+ / - COMMUNITY ATTENDANT WAGES

As in past sessions, one of our top priorities for 2023 was raising community attendant wages. The attendant workforce is crucial to keeping Texans with disabilities and older adults healthy and in their own homes. But recruitment and retention of these workers is at high risk due to an extremely low base wage, no benefits, increasing demand, and alternative employers paying much higher wages.

At the beginning of 2023, we recommended a base hourly wage of \$15. This was a big ask, but we were optimistic. In addition to the budget surplus, we had seen a jump in media coverage on attendant wages (which would continue through the session), legislative leadership on this issue was strong, and we knew CTD member and partner advocacy would be extraordinary (it was).

As the session played out, however, legislators still had a lot of confusion about how to raise the base wage, and it became clear early on that the \$15 figure we had aimed for was unlikely. When the state budget went to conference committee in April, it looked like we might get \$11. In the end, though, the Legislature put the **base hourly wage of community attendants at \$10.60**.

We are disappointed, to say the least; this is woefully inadequate. We are encouraged, though, that the budget conference committee took the Senate's methodology of raising the wage, which will give more to attendants than the House's version: \$2 billion this biennium and another \$2 billion carried forward in the next biennium's base budget. This will put us in a stronger position to push for a competitive wage next session.

In addition, even though \$10.60 per hour is not nearly enough, it's the biggest increase the Legislature has ever given attendants, by far. In the context of the budget as a whole, the Legislative Budget Board identified only two Medicaid items as budget highlights, and attendant wages was by far the larger.

PRESS SNAPSHOT

“Personal care attendants in Texas are so egregiously underpaid that even though the Legislature just boosted their base wages by 30% — from \$8.11 to \$10.60 an hour, effective Sept. 1 — many caregivers could still be poor enough to qualify for food stamps and subsidized housing.”

Austin American-Statesman opinion piece, June 12, 2023.

- INTEREST LISTS

The House and Senate were more aligned on Medicaid interest lists, which is the **waitlist to receive services in the community** under a Medicaid waiver program. With about 160,000 unduplicated individuals as of December 2022, Texas has the nation's largest and longest waitlist. Put another way, on average, a Texan joining the list at #156,000 today will be looking at a wait of at least 27 years before reaching the top of the list at the State's current rate.

The Legislature can reduce this wait by adding funding for Medicaid waiver slots. In 2023, they **added funding for 1,831 slots in the next biennium, less than a 1% annual reduction** in the interest list.



Above: A-Corps intern Taryn Medina visits with Senator Bryan Hughes from the Senate Finance Committee on a May 18 trip to the Capitol.

+ EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION (ECI)

ECI is **services for very young children with disabilities**. Despite the popularity and benefit of this program to young Texans and their families, it's always a struggle to maintain funding levels. The House version of the budget provided much more funding to ECI than the Senate's—a **\$57 million increase**. While this figure could and should have been higher, we were pleased that the budget conference committee stuck with the House's increase, plus added another bump through a **\$6 million exceptional item**.

- DENTAL BENEFIT

For years, CTD has been the lead advocate supporting legislation relating to **Medicaid reimbursement for dental services provided to adults with disabilities**. After several sessions of incremental progress, legislation about a preventative benefit passed in 2021, a major victory. However, the Texas Health & Human Services Commission (HHSC) has not yet implemented the program. Even though the benefit is in statute and we worked to secure the funding in 2023, the **Legislature rejected a rider to fund access to dental care for those who have zero benefits**.

The story isn't over yet though: The Governor's Council on People with Disabilities (GCPD) has recommended that the Legislature fund a dental benefit in the interim session. We'll take every opportunity to support their recommendation.

Voting

Last session, CTD's hardest elections work was defensive: opposing and mitigating the worst parts of restrictive voting reforms. This year, we had more opportunities to focus on constructive legislation, improving the elections process for voters with disabilities. Our Deputy Executive Director Chase Bearden took the lead on CTD's voting and elections advocacy.

AT THE POLLS

➤ **SB 477** (Zaffirini) was the success story of elections legislation this session. It will strengthen voting rights for people with disabilities at the polls, with provisions for:

- codifying **priority space in line** at polls for people with disabilities (previously, this had been left up to the polling place judge; now it's in statute),
- practices for effective **curbside voting**,
- better **on-site signage**, and
- **online information on early voting**.

MAIL IN BALLOTS

➤ **SB 1599** (Hughes) improves voter access and the overall security of the mail in voting process. It put into place a **system for voters to correct or cure minor errors on their mail in ballot or mail in ballot application**. In past elections, we've seen valid ballots go uncounted because voters did not learn that there was an error on their ballot until after the election was over.

➤ Rep. Bucy, who has done a lot for voters with disabilities the past couple sessions, authored **HB 357**, which will fix an issue with the functioning of the **online ballot tracker** that was implemented by his legislation last session.

■ One of the biggest heartbreaks this session was **HB 3159** (Leach). This bill would have provided for a **mail in ballot in an accessible format** for voters with visual impairments, limited dexterity of the arms or hands, dyslexia, and other disabilities. Voters would still have had to print the ballot, hand sign it, and mail it, but would have been able to mark it independently and privately.

HB 3159 overcame a series of uphill battles: a skeptical House Elections committee, languishing for weeks in House Calendars, and narrowly making a crucial deadline to proceed to the House floor. We are grateful to all the CTD members who called lawmakers to help keep this bill alive! With overwhelming bipartisan support in the full House and Senate, the bill sailed through the rest of the process to the Governor's desk. **Governor Abbott vetoed HB 3159**, however, citing unconvincing reasons.

PRESS SNAPSHOT

"This is giving people the exact same opportunity and access as anyone else. Everyone else that votes now has the right to a secret ballot, and voters with disabilities, too, should have that right," Chase Bearden, Deputy Executive Director of the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, told Votebeat. "It is time. We can't wait until the next session to do this."

Gov. Greg Abbott vetoes bill that would give people with disabilities new option to vote by mail, Texas Tribune, June 20, 2023.

Education & Childcare

With Advocacy Director Jolene Sanders at the lead and major support from TCDD Policy Fellow[†] Jennifer Toon, CTD pursued a range of bills to support toddlers and young children with disabilities, public school students with disabilities and their families, and childcare providers this session. Private school vouchers took up a lot of room in the Capitol, but we made progress in other areas, most notably, student safety.

PRESS SNAPSHOT

“This was a big win. A lot of us would have liked to see it go a little bit farther. But it’s definitely the first step in the right direction to crack down on some of these uses of force and restraint that we know all too well are disproportionately used on students with disabilities and students of color.”

CTD Advocacy Director Jolene Sanders in Texas Public Radio interview June 6, 2023, celebrating the passage of SB 133, No Kids in Cuffs

STUDENT SAFETY

Over the last few years, CTD and our partners have noted an alarming uptick in news articles and reports about students with disabilities being violently, and even lethally, disciplined in public schools across the state. Right out of the gate this session, CTD helped to organize a powerful press conference on harmful student restraint in schools to educate lawmakers about the dangers of such practices—and policy solutions to end them.



✦ CTD was instrumental in the passing of **SB 133** (West), the **No Kids in Cuffs** bill, a measure to ban certain types of physical restraint, tasers, handcuffs, and the use of chemical irritants on students in 5th grade and below.

Above: from left, Representative Lacey Hull, House author of No Kids in Cuffs, CTD’s Jolene Sanders, and the Autism Society of Texas’ Jacquie Benestante at the School Shouldn’t Hurt: Ending Harmful Student Restraint Press Conference, January 30.

CENSORSHIP IN THE CLASSROOM

✦ We stood against **HB 1804** (Leo-Wilson), which would have prevented public schools from teaching material that “condones civil disorder, social strife, or disregard for the law.” The disability rights movement—or any civil rights movement—includes instances of people breaking the law and civil disobedience. We were wary that this bill could gain traction and issued a press release explaining why. We applauded the Austin American-Statesman for their opinion piece on HB 1804, which featured our Policy Fellow[‡] J Canciglia, as well as CTD board member Maria Palacios. This bill died in committee.

INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE

■ Parents of young children with disabilities, and advocates for those families, have encountered difficulties in finding childcare providers prepared to serve children with disabilities. **HB 211** (M. González) would have ensured that **children with disabilities were appropriately included in daycare placement and that childcare providers received training to support them in creating inclusive programs**. This bill would have also mandated that **parents receive information about developmental milestones and early childhood intervention services**. HB 211 was on its third session and made record progress, passing the House and being referred to the Senate Health & Human Services committee. However, it ran out of time before full passage.

EARLY PICKUPS

It is common practice for school personnel to contact a child's parent when a child is having behavior issues at school or if a teacher is unsure how to support a student with disabilities. When this occurs, the school often requests or encourages the parent to pick the child up before the end of the school day. These early pickups, which are not considered official out-of-school suspensions, disproportionately impact students with disabilities and students of color, excluding certain children from the classroom and from other important periods of academic and social interaction.

■ CTD worked closely with Rep. Allen's office on **HB 773**, which would have **prohibited schools from using undocumented school-initiated early pickups as a disciplinary technique** or as a reaction to student behavior when that behavior does not violate the student code of conduct. This bill was also a refile on its third session and made it further in the process than it ever has. HB 773 was placed on the House General State Calendar, where it ran out of time.

VOUCHERS

■ You may have seen the fight over **SB 8** (Creighton), the Senate's voucher bill, in the news. It did not pass.

A school voucher or education savings account (ESA) is a subsidy that parents use to send their children to a private school, as opposed to a public one. The subsidy comes from the state (in other words, taxpayers).

CTD fought hard against private school vouchers this session, which would **take money away from public schools and present a host of potential problems for students with disabilities**.

For students with disabilities, vouchers are problematic for a number of reasons:

- Public schools cannot deny a student enrollment, but private schools can, including if a student has a disability.
- If a family uses a voucher, they waive their child's right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), which is guaranteed under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Private schools would still be able to bill families for extra tuition above the voucher amount.
- Private schools are not subject to the same accountability that public schools are.
- In many parts of the state, there are few or no choices of where to send a student to school, outside of public schools. These options decrease as children get older.
- A voucher system would drain funds from public education, making it more difficult to address current problems with special education.

■ Despite failing during the regular session, the Governor is doubling down on his efforts and is expected to call a special session on public education—including vouchers— in the fall.

Healthcare & Access to Medications

Access to the right medication at the right time is best decided between a patient and their doctor. This is the main guiding principle for CTD when working on pharmaceutical policy, access to medication, drug regulation and enforcement, and pharmaceutical research and development. Efforts this session to strengthen consumer protections and expand access were led by Deputy Executive Director Chase Bearden, with substantial support from Policy Fellow[†] J Canciglia.

MEDICAID

➤ **HB 1283** (Oliverson) maintains **Texas Medicaid's single formulary**, which means that the preferred drug list is the same across Medicaid plans. This not only ensures less potential confusion when a consumer switches plans, it also guarantees a proper continuum of care in medical treatment.

➤ **HB 3286** (Klick) allows **Medicaid managed care organizations to go outside their preferred drug list for their outpatient formulary** in certain circumstances for the patient's benefit. These circumstances are:

- when a patient is being prescribed a non-preferred antidepressant or antipsychotic in a hospital setting and is discharged stable on that medication,
- during a preferred medication shortage,
- if the preferred medication is not available at a pharmacy within 10 miles of the patient, or
- if the preferred medication is expected to cause an issue with patient compliance.

CONSUMER PROTECTIONS

➤ **HB 999** (Price), the **Copay Accumulators** bill, was a multiyear, multisession endeavor to ban the practice of commercial insurance companies double dipping into copay assistance funds while not applying those funds to a patient's deductible or out-of-pocket maximum.

CTD played a critical role in advocating for this bill on both the House and Senate side, making office visits, giving both invited and public testimony across multiple hearings, and utilizing our broad network of partners and advocates to raise awareness of the issue. CTD helped lead the Texas All Copays Count Coalition (55 organizations) and the Coalition for Stable Patients (24 organizations) to get this bill across the finish line.

We are extremely pleased to have secured this win, but remain vigilant for new insurance practices that unfairly shifts cost onto the patient.

➤ **HB 1337** (Hull) **bans fail-first step-therapy protocols for antipsychotics in commercial insurance**, which is a stricter mandate than the step-therapy exception request covering other drugs in commercial insurance.

■ Unfortunately, patient advocacy in the realm of private insurance was not all wins. **Non-medical switching** is the practice by which an insurance company decides to take a patient off of the medication that they were otherwise stable on and switch them to another medication for profit motive. CTD has been fighting this practice for multiple legislative sessions, as it can have devastating effects on patients in delicate health situations who require long-term treatment. This session, CTD once again partnered with the Coalition for Stable Patients and worked hard to support **HB 826** (Lambert), but it did not make sufficient progress to passage.

INFUSION PRIOR AUTHORIZATIONS

➤ **HB 755** (Julie Johnson) limits the frequency of allowable infusion prior authorization requirements for autoimmune drugs covered by commercial insurance to once per year. This bill fixes an issue whereby insurance companies, who already approved a drug for the treatment of an autoimmune condition, require that same approval process for every infusion. This leads to increased administrative burden on the doctor's office and infusion suite, and potentially leading to dangerous delays in treatment. CTD worked with Representative Julie Johnson's office for assistance during hearings.

BIOMARKERS

➤ **SB 989** (Huffman) mandates that **biomarker testing be covered by commercial insurers in Texas**. Biomarker testing is the cutting-edge science of determining what drug is the best option for treating someone's disease based on genetic testing. Typically, biomarker testing is pursued for the treatment of cancer based on the tumor's genetic makeup. Finding the right treatment right away decreases the likelihood of disease progression and increases the likelihood of remission. Older adults and people with disabilities are among groups who have limited access to biomarker testing, and this bill will help to bridge that gap.

KRATOM

➤ **SB 497** (Zaffirini) **establishes rules and regulations regarding the labeling, quality, and safety of kratom products** for sale and distribution, a plant-based therapy used by people with disabilities, among others. It also prohibits the sale of kratom to minors.

MEDICAL CANNABIS

■ Further **expansion of the Texas Compassionate Use Program (TCUP)** started the session off strong. **HB 1805** (Klick) would have:

- expanded TCUP to include chronic pain in its list of approved conditions,
- increased the THC cap to 5%, and then later 10 mg per dose after a committee substitute, and
- afforded the Department of Public Safety the ability to include other conditions into the approved condition list.

This was staggeringly popular bill. No one testified against it in the House Public Health committee hearing. It was reported favorably from committee with no naysayers. It passed to a third reading with a ratio of 121 yes's to 23 no's and then passed its final vote on the House floor with 127 yes's and 19 no's. Compared to previous years' voting records, the amount of willingness of the House of Representatives to pass medical cannabis reform was incredible. HB 1805 was received in the Senate on April 12. It was referred to the Senate Committee on Senate Health and Human Services then re-referred to Senate Water, Agriculture, and Rural Affairs where it died without a Senate hearing.

CTD worked in tandem with the Texas Patients First Foundation to push this particular bill. CTD and TPF employed a tight advocacy strategy that balanced many of the variables that make medical cannabis legislation unpalatable to a small few in the Texas Legislature. One variable we could not control was the Lieutenant Governor's hesitancy to allow HB 1805 a hearing and debate in the Senate. As the session wound down and we went from having months to weeks to days to get this bill through, Deputy Executive Director Chase Bearden explored all avenues to get a hearing.

Unfortunately, people with chronic pain and people in the program who are not getting adequate relief from the current medical protocol, like prescribed opioids, will have to wait until next session.

Criminal & Youth Justice

In 2021, CTD made major strides in criminal justice reform, and we continued that in the 88th legislative session, with outstanding leadership from TCDD Policy Fellow[†] Jennifer Toon. This is critical work because it is well documented that people with disabilities are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, as well as more likely to be victimized while in the system and receive less access to supportive services.

STATE PRISONS

✦ We worked relentlessly to help pass **SB 1146** (West), a bill that will end the dehumanizing—and completely inaccessible—conditions of **medical transport for women** in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), known as **medical chain**.

Below: advocates at an April 11 House Corrections hearing, from left, Jennifer Owens, Lori Mellinger, Marci Simmons, Andreas Michelle, Deb Gore, and CTD's Dennis Borel and Jennifer Toon.



✦ During the pandemic, virtual visitation was the only option for incarcerated people to see their loved ones. It was an invaluable tool, but TDCJ continued to prefer virtual over in-person visitation, even when restrictions were lifted, and accessibility was questionable. We helped to pass **HB 2708** (Swanson), which will **protect in-person visitation rights and accessibility**.

■ The Texas heat is increasingly brutal and reaches dangerous temperatures inside TDCJ facilities. **HB 1708** (Canales), which passed the House, called for **temperature control in our prisons** (maintained at not less than 65 degrees Fahrenheit or more than 85 degrees Fahrenheit). CTD was encouraged when it was referred to the Senate Finance committee, only to see it willfully ignored to devastating effects. This summer, over 50 people, including a woman with disabilities, have reportedly died inside Texas prisons from heat related symptoms (as of July 2023).

COUNTY JAILS

■ A refile from last session, **HB 1435** (Jarvis Johnson) would have created a **Family Liaison position in county jails**, ensuring that families would have a consistent point of contact for their incarcerated loved ones. Not all county jails have a consistent staff member acting as a liaison for communication between those incarcerated and their loved ones. Without a reliable point of contact, families cannot check on the health and well-being of their relatives in county jails, and an open line of communication regarding medical needs and updates is especially important for individuals with disabilities. A point of contact like this would have helped prevent medical neglect of people in custody at county jail facilities.

HB 1435 languished in Calendars and never advanced. We have more work to do to educate legislators why this issue is important. CTD will continue the fight for county jail reforms during the interim.

YOUTH JUSTICE

Like their counterparts in the adult system, many Texas youth under the care of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) have a mental health diagnosis or an intellectual and / or developmental disability (ID / DD). Both federal and state investigations in recent years have revealed that state facilities are sites of multiple forms of abuse and inadequate mental health support and may violate the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) rights of the youth in their care.

■ In support of the **Finish the 5 campaign**, CTD called upon the state to close the remaining 5 state secure juvenile detention facilities in Texas and redirect resources to community-based support that would better serve these individuals. The Finish the 5 bill, **HB 4356** (Talarico), called for a staggered closure plan of the five remaining TJJD facilities and would have created a new Office of Youth Safety and Rehabilitation within the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). The bill was heard but left pending in committee. We see this as the start of a conversation to re-imagine and build a system of youth justice that does not rely on carceral settings.

RAISE YOUR VOICE!

CTD's interactive RAISE YOUR VOICE! Program is designed to provide a functional understanding of the legislative process while connecting self-advocates with the CTD advocacy team and each other to work on shared policy priorities. It also gives CTD staff insight into the needs and concerns of Texans with disabilities that inform organizational policy priorities, recommendations, and strategy.

During the 2023 Legislature, we:

- educated 367 participants on 12 RYV calls from February 13 – May 22,
- connected participants, organizations and legislative offices, as well as self-advocate leaders, and
- gathered input from Texans with disabilities, which informed our advocacy throughout the session and will continue to do so as we move into the 2024 interim.

What RYV participants are saying:

“Everyone at the Coalition of Texas with Disabilities makes it easier to understand the bills and the legislation process.”

“Thank you for allowing me to participate in the Raise Your Voice meeting yesterday. I found it most informative and encouraging.”

Other priorities

GUARDIANSHIP

✚ During the session, we caught wind of a well-intentioned, but potentially dangerous guardianship bill. **HB 653** (Allison) would have removed **due process requirements that a family must go through to place a child with an intellectual disability turning 18 under a guardianship**. Those requirements are there to protect individuals under a guardianship and should remain in place. HB 653 passed the House but died in a Senate committee. Hats off to all the CTD members who called multiple legislators to voice their opposition to this bill!

ID / DD

■ **HB 4702** (Campos) would have helped **people with intellectual and/ or developmental disabilities (ID / DD) receive mentorship from trained peers who also have ID / DD**. Self-advocates and trained ID / DD peer support specialists Jordan Smelley and Logan Archer went to great lengths to support this bill. Logan arranged a meeting in the Speaker's Office to gain support, and Jordan traveled to Austin for a committee hearing, only to run into an hours-long debate on the House floor. Finally, the House adjourned and the committee could meet. HB 4702 was the last bill heard in that hearing, and Jordan was the last person to testify. He did an awesome job and continued to work with Logan and our Dennis Borel to move the bill through the process. While it passed the House, HB 4702 died in the Senate.

Right: advocates at an April 19 House Human Services hearing, front, from left, Brooke Hohfeld, Representative Liz Campos, Cindy Whitaker, Lauren Gerken, CTD's Dennis Borel; back, Jordan Smelley, Chairman James Frank.

■ For a person with ID / DD or their family, navigating the services offered by the state can be exceedingly challenging, from navigating the complex nature of Medicaid waiver programs, to understanding long-term care issues, and much more. **HB 729** (Rose) would have created a statewide **council on the coordination of services for Texans with ID / DD** and ensured that they and their families were served in a strategic, holistic manner to help them navigate all the services available. Governor Abbott vetoed this bill.



MEDICAID EXPANSION

✚/■ Texans with disabilities currently not eligible for coverage would gain it with **Medicaid expansion**, which is why we have been members of the Cover Texas Now coalition and Sick of It TX campaign, who both advocate for health insurance expansion. While the Legislature did not even give a Medicaid expansion bill a hearing, they did pass **HB 12** (Rose), which **expands postpartum coverage for mothers**—from 2 months postpartum to a full year.

END OF LIFE

✚ It's not a fun topic, but **end of life policies** are critical to the disability community. For over a decade, our Dennis Borel has been working with a large group of stakeholders to pass end of life/ advanced directives legislation that protects both the lives and final wishes of Texans with disabilities. This session, **HB 3162** (Klick) accomplishes this goal by **prohibiting consideration of a person's disability in treatment decisions unless medically appropriate and installing more protections in decisions to end treatment.**

ACCESSIBLE PARKING

✚ **SB 904** (Springer) will create a **minimum enforcement standard** for accessible parking spaces.

DRIVERS' LICENSES

✚ **HB 3132** (Guerra) will give deaf and hard of hearing drivers the **option of including a designation of hearing impairment on their driver's license.** The intent of this bill is to promote safety during interactions with law enforcement.

CAREGIVING

✚ **SB 52** (Zaffirini) establishes the right of a state hospital patient to designate an **essential caregiver for in-person visitation.**

✚ **HB 1009** (Turner) calls for the **criminal history review for direct care workers that are still under investigation.** This bill originated with an incident in Turner's district, where an individual died in the care of an attendant who was under investigation but not convicted for abuse.

HOUSING

✚ **HB 1193** (Turner) **bans homeowner associations (HOAs) from prohibiting a property owner from renting their property to a housing choice voucher recipient.** People with disabilities are

disproportionately represented in housing assistance programs, and it can be difficult to find a place that will accept a housing choice voucher. Moreover, once someone receives a housing choice voucher, they have a limited amount of time to use it. Finding a rental that accepts vouchers within that time limit is extremely important in the prevention of homelessness and institutionalization for people with disabilities.

Board homes are lightly-regulated, if at all, and provide room and board in exchange for a person's social security check. Target populations of board homes often include people with physical disabilities or ID / DD who do not qualify for an HCS waiver and people with a mental illness, among many other groups. 3 bills by Senator Borris Miles will **make board homes safer:**

✚ **SB 186** requires that, if hospitals and other health facilities discharge patients to a group home, boarding home, or similar facility, that facility must hold an **applicable state-issued license or permit,** unless there is no licensed facility available or the patient chooses that unlicensed facility.

✚ **SB 188** requires **criminal background checks** for all applicants and employees of board homes.

✚ **SB 189** institutes **mandatory abuse reporting,** with a charge of a Class A misdemeanor for failure to report abuse.

SSLCS

■ **SB 944** (Kolkhorst) will make it **easier for parents or guardians to commit someone to a state supported living center (SSLC).** We opposed the filed bill, and while it did pass, **we helped to make it less damaging:** the original version stripped out due process, which we were able to restore. However, it no longer requires the assessment of an expert to commit an individual to an SSLC. That decision will now be up to a judge.

ADVOCACY CORPS

CTD's newest engagement program, the Advocacy Corps⁺, seeks to engage, encourage, and support self-advocates who have lived experience with disabilities. A-Corps interns commit to legislative participation and receive training and support from CTD staff. A-Corps interns selected advocacy priorities based on their own lives, including: community attendant services, access to higher education, guardianship, and peer support services.



In our first year,

- 12 A-Corps interns joined the program from around the state,
- CTD presented 3 virtual workshops and facilitated 6 Capitol visits, and
- 2 bills were filed at the request of A-Corps interns.

Above: from left, CTD's Chase Bearden with A-Corps interns Leah Gardner, Laurie Truesdell, Megan Truesdell, and Shawnett Viani on a Capitol visit.

THANK YOU TO CTD'S 2023 ADVOCACY PARTNERS

AARP Texas | ADAPT of Texas / PACT | Alliance for Patient Access | American Council of the Blind of Texas
American Kratom Association | Any Baby Can | Art Spark Texas | Austin Justice Coalition | Autism Society of Texas
Biomarker Coalition | CDS in Texas | Coalition for Public Schools | Coalition for Stable Patients | Coastal Bend
Center for Independent Living | Cover Texas Now! Disability Rights Texas | Easterseals Serving Central Texas
ECI Coalition | Ed Trust | Education Justice Workgroup | End of Life stakeholders | Epilepsy Foundation Central
& South Texas | Every Texan | Family to Family Network | Finish the Five Coalition | Girls Empowerment Network
Grassroots Leadership | Guardianship Reform & Supported Decision Making Workgroup | Guide Dogs for the Blind
Lioness Justice Impacted Women's Alliance | Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) | Minaret
Foundation | NAMI Texas | National ARP/IEP Advocates | National Association of Social Workers Texas Chapter
Paralyzed Veterans of America- Texas Chapter | Paso Del Norte Children's Development Center | Private Providers
Association of Texas | Providers Alliance for Community Services of Texas (PACSTX) | REACH Resource Centers
for Independent Living | REV UP Texas | Secure Democracy | Sick of It TX | State Rare Disease Education Initiative
(STRiDE) Rare Disease Educational Forum | Statewide Leadership Council | Texans Care for Children | Texas
Advocates | Texas After Violence Project | Texas All Copays Count Coalition | Texas Appleseed | Texas Association
for Home Care and Hospice | Texas Association of Community Health Centers | Texas Association of Health Plans
Texas Center for Disability Studies | Texas Center for Justice and Equity | Texas Coalition for Healthy Minds | Texas
Civil Rights Project | Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities | Texas Council of Administrators of Special
Education (TCASE) | Texas Health Institute | Texas Healthcare & Bioscience Institute | Texas Impact | Texas Hospital
Association | Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition | Texas Medical Association | Texas Parent to Parent
Texas Patients First Foundation | Texas Pediatric Society | Texas Rare Alliance | The Arc of Texas
Treaty Oak Consulting | VELA Families | Women's Justice Coalition



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** Parent of a child with a disability

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