

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

House Bill Would Prevent Students with Disabilities from Learning their own History in Public Schools

April 27, 2023 (Austin, Texas)—The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities flagged HB 1804 (Leo-Wilson) as a potentially harmful bill that would block the factual teaching of the disability rights movement in public schools, among other civil rights movements and foundational developments in US history.

HB 1804 proposes to amend the Texas education code to require that instructional materials must not “include selections or works that condone civil disorder, social strife, or disregard for the law.”

How does one teach about a movement that included civil disorder, social strife, or disregard for the law and also contributed to policy change that shaped laws in effect today?

Like the Boston Tea Party and even the American Revolution, the history of disability advocacy and every one of its foundational successes in this country was built upon the principles of civil disobedience. Disability advocates blocked traffic on Madison Avenue in New York City in 1972. They chained themselves to the Capitol rotunda in Washington DC for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), to protect the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and more. They took over government buildings across the US in 1977, one particular instance lasting a month that is now known as the 504 Sit-in.

“People with disabilities didn’t get their rights by being nice,” said J Canciglia of the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, who studied the disability rights movement at the collegiate level. “The United States has a long history of dismissing people with disabilities who go through legal channels for advocacy, who are begging for their lives. I see us being dismissed all the time down here—even now, this year.”

A later section of HB 1804 states that instructional materials must “present contrasting points of view regarding significant political or social movements in history in a balanced and factual manner.”

Canciglia points out that the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was vetoed twice by Nixon over concerns of cost. “Is the appropriate contrasting viewpoint that financial concerns are greater than a child with a disability being able to get a free and accessible public education? Or to be able to vote when they turn 18? A key facet of the disability rights movement was that disabled lives are worth living. Is the contrasting viewpoint that disabled lives are not worth living?”

Students with disabilities deserve to know where their rights come from. Canciglia notes, “the works of every major disability rights activist say in their pages that, eventually, there comes a time when we stop asking for our rights and we take our rights—we stop asking to keep our rights and defend our rights.”

Students with disabilities deserve access to the works of these key historical figures within the movement. They also deserve to be free of dehumanizing contrasting views regarding the acquisition of their rights. HB1804 is pending action in the House Public Education committee.

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#### About CTD

Founded in 1978, CTD is the largest and oldest member-driven cross disability organization in the state. We focus on state-level governmental advocacy, professional disability consulting, consumer direction, and public awareness activities (primarily in the arts) to make Texas a leader in public policy and culture related to people with disabilities of all ages. Learn more about CTD’s work at: [www.TXDisabilities.org](http://www.TXDisabilities.org).