

- SUBJECT:** Restricting publication of home addresses of counselors, social workers
- COMMITTEE:** State Affairs — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 13 ayes — Phelan, Hernandez, Deshotel, Guerra, Harless, Holland, Hunter, P. King, Parker, Raymond, E. Rodriguez, Smithee, Springer
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — Will Francis, National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter; (*Registered, but did not testify:* John McCord, NFIB; Courtney Hoffman, Texas Association for Behavior Analyst Public Policy Group; Shannon Noble, Texas Counseling Association; Kevin Stewart, Texas Psychological Association)
- Against — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Walter West II, VHSE RPT)
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Timothy Speer, Health and Human Services Commission; Eric Beverly, Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation)
- BACKGROUND:** Occupations Code chs. 503, 504, and 505 provide for the licensing of professional counselors, chemical dependency counselors, and social workers and authorize or direct the licensing body for each of these occupations to prepare a roster or registry containing the name or the name and address of each license holder. Ch. 403 provides for the licensing of dyslexia practitioners and therapists.
- DIGEST:** HB 125 would prohibit state licensing bodies from publishing on their websites the home address of a licensed professional counselor, social worker, dyslexia practitioner, dyslexia therapist, or chemical dependency counselor, unless they had the licensee's permission to do so.
- The bill would apply to rosters, registries, and databases of licensees of these occupations published on the websites of the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, Texas State Board of Examiners of

Professional Counselors, Texas Department of State Health Services, and Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners.

Licensees who made a request in a manner prescribed by the relevant department or board would be able to opt in to have a home address included in a roster, registry, or database.

HB 125 would not except a home address from disclosure under public information laws.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

HB 125 would help protect social workers, professional counselors, chemical dependency counselors, and dyslexia practitioners and therapists from risks stemming from the nature of their jobs and the sensitive populations with whom they work.

These professionals may be at greater risk of threats such as stalking if their private information is published online without their permission. For example, the bill would protect social workers with Child Protective Services, for whom having an address listed online could put them at risk if the social worker were involved in a case in which a client felt aggrieved by a court decision.

Although some Texas licensing bodies already have removed private address information from their online roster of licensees, HB 125 would make this change permanent and ensure that other agencies did likewise.

The bill would balance privacy and transparency by preserving the right of the public to make an open records request for a licensee's home address information.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

No concerns identified.