

No. 23-0697

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IN THE SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS

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The State of Texas; Office of the Attorney General; Ken Paxton,  
in his official capacity as Attorney General of Texas; The Texas  
Medical Board; and the Texas Health and Human Services  
Commission,

*Appellants,*

*v.*

*Lazaro Loe, et al.,*

*Appellees.*

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On Direct Appeal from the 201<sup>st</sup>  
Judicial District Court, Travis County

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***Amici Curiae* Brief of Texas Values and Family Policy Alliance  
in Support of Texas**

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Jonathan M. Saenz  
Texas Bar Number: 24041845  
TEXAS VALUES  
1005 Congress Ave.  
Austin, TX 78701  
512.478.2220  
512.478.2229 (fax)  
[jsaenz@txvalues.org](mailto:jsaenz@txvalues.org)  
*Counsel for Amici Curiae*

## IDENTITY OF PARTIES AND COUNSEL

### **Appellants:**

The State of Texas  
Office of the Attorney General  
Ken Paxton, in his official capacity as Attorney General of Texas  
The Texas Medical Board  
The Texas Health and Human Services Commission

### **Counsel:**

Ken Paxton  
Brent Webster  
Natalie D. Thompson  
Lanora C. Pettit  
Office of the Attorney General  
P.O. Box 12548 (MC 059)  
Austin, Texas 78711-2548  
Telephone: (512) 936-1700  
Facsimile: (512) 474-2697

### **Appellees:**

Lazaro Loe  
Mary Moe  
Matthew Moe  
Nora Noe  
Sarah Soe  
Gina Goe  
Luna Loe  
Maeve Moe  
Nathan Noe  
Samantha Soe  
Grayson Goe  
PFLAG  
GLMA

**Counsel:**

Kennon L. Wooten  
kwooten@scottdoug.com  
Lauren Ditty  
lditty@scottdoug.com  
Scott Douglass & McConnico  
LLP  
303 Colorado Street, Suite 2400  
Austin, Texas 78701-2589  
Telephone: (512) 495-6300  
Facsimile: (512) 495-6399

Paul D. Castillo  
pcastillo@lambdalegal.org  
Lambda Legal Defense Fund and  
Education Fund, Inc.  
3500 Oak Lawn Ave., Unit 500  
Dallas, Texas 75219  
Telephone: (512) 219-8585

Allissa Pollard  
allissa.pollard@arnoldporter.com  
Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer,  
LLP  
700 Louisiana Street, Suite 4000  
Houston, Texas 77002-2755  
Telephone: (713) 576-2451  
Facsimile: (713) 576-2499

Lori B. Leskin  
Lori.leskin@arnoldporter.com  
Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer, LLP  
250 West 55th Street  
New York, NY 10019-9710  
Telephone: (212) 836-8541  
Facsimile: (512) 836-6441

Omar Gonzalez-Pagan  
Ogonzalez-  
pagan@lambdalegal.org  
Lambda Legal Defense Fund  
and Education Fund, Inc.  
120 Wall Street, 19th Floor  
New York, NY 10005-3919  
Telephone: (212) 809-8585

Harper Seldin  
hseldin@aclu.org  
American Civil Liberties Union  
Foundation  
125 Broad Street, Floor 18  
New York, NY 10004  
Telephone: (212) 549-2500

Karen L. Loewy  
kloewy@lambdalegal.org  
Sasha J. Buchert  
sbuchert@lambdalegal.org  
Lambda Legal Defense and  
Education Fund, Inc.  
1776 K. Street, N.W., 8th Floor  
Washington, DC 20006-2304  
Telephone: (202) 804-6245

Lynly S. Egyes  
lynly@transgenderlawcenter.org  
Milo Inglehart  
milo@transgenderlawcenter.org  
Transgender Law Center  
594 Dean Street, Suite 11  
Brooklyn, NY 11238  
Telephone: (510) 587-9696

Brian Klosterboer  
bklosterboer@aclutx.org  
Chloe Kempf  
[ckempf@aclutx.org](mailto:ckempf@aclutx.org)

Adriana Pinoapinon@aclutx.org  
ACLU Foundation of Texas, Inc.  
P.O. Box 8306  
Houston, Texas 77288  
Telephone: (713) 942-8146  
Facsimile: (713) 942-8966

Shawn Thomas Meerkamper  
shawn@transgenderlawcenter.org  
Dale Melchert  
dale@transgenderlawcenter.org  
Transgender Law Center

P.O. Box 70976  
Oakland, CA 94612  
Telephone: (510) 587-9696

Elizabeth Gill  
egill@aclunc.org  
American Civil Liberties Union  
Foundation  
39 Drumm Street  
San Francisco, CA 94111  
Telephone: (415) 343-1237

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## INTEREST OF AMICI CURIAE<sup>1</sup>

**Texas Values** is an independent nonprofit organization and is the state family policy council (FPC) in Texas associated with Focus on The Family and Family Policy Alliance (FPA). The mission of Amici Curiae is to preserve and advance a culture where religious liberty flourishes, family values prosper, and every human life is valued and protected. Through policy research, public education, grassroots mobilization, review of legislation and the provision of legal analyses, and testifying at the Texas Legislature and other governmental entities – Texas Values promotes its core values of *faith, family, and freedom*.

**Family Policy Alliance** (FPA) is a Christian ministry that defends faith and protects families by organizing, educating, and mobilizing the social conservative movement in America. Originally founded by Focus on the Family in 2004, FPA is emerging as one of the most influential leaders of the social conservative movement in America.

## SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Plaintiffs’ concerns about Senate Bill 14 (“S.B. 14”), and the solutions they seek, are more deeply rooted in nature than they can imagine. The

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<sup>1</sup> No fee was paid or will be paid for preparing this brief. See Tex. R. App. P. 11(c).

mind and body are two distinct but integrated mechanisms given to humans by nature and nature's God. Minds can be changed easily, frequently, and convincingly; bodies are immutable. When attempts to change the body are made, those attempts frequently appear unnatural and dysfunctional. The spurious argument that a child's body must be brought into conformity with a child's mind in order to be his or her "true self" is a false narrative with no legitimate medical or scientific basis. Male and female are not how we *feel* we are, but what we *actually* are.

The Texas Constitution guarantees protection against discrimination based on sex, thus requiring male and female individuals to be treated equally in the absence of any compelling state interest. SB 14 meets this threshold by equally prohibiting gender transitioning treatments and procedures for both male and female children in line with the historical and legal understanding of the term "sex."

Further, parental rights are well-established in Texas as being fundamental liberty interests requiring a strict scrutiny standard for governmental restrictions placed upon them. *See Reno v. Flores*, 507 U.S. 292, 302 (1993). In protecting children from serious and irreversible harm,

SB 14 easily survives this high strict scrutiny standard with its thoughtful and intentional narrowly tailored approach for sex development disorders and currently transitioning individuals.

## ARGUMENT

### I. S.B. 14 Upholds Equal Protection in the Texas Constitution's equality-under-the-law provisions

The Texas Constitution is clear that “Equality under the law shall not be denied or abridged because of sex, race, color, creed, or national origin.”<sup>2</sup> As an initial matter, statutory classifications are ordinarily valid if they are rationally related to and further a legitimate state interest. *San Antonio Indep. Sch. Dist. V. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 1, 55 (1973). In the case at hand, and as discussed in depth below, involving fundamental liberty interests such as parental rights protected under the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, strict scrutiny is the correct standard. *Holly v. Adams*, 544 S.W.2d 367, 370 (Tex. 1976) (recognizing that because the case

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<sup>2</sup> Texas Constitution Article I § 3a

involved the right of the parent to surround the child with proper influences, the case was "strictly scrutinized").

The State of Texas has authority and a moral responsibility to look after the health and safety of its children. In an area of new and developing debate, Texas could rationally and understandably take a cautious approach to permitting irreversible medical treatments of its children.

The district court's contention that SB 14 discriminates on the basis of "sex, sex stereotypes, and transgender status" is as surprising as it is incorrect. SB 14 bans gender transition services for minors of *both* sexes. The ban applies to all minors, regardless of their birth with male or female sex organs, which is a valid prohibition of a medical procedure not implicating "sex." Indeed, this court held in *Bell v. Low Income Women of Tex.*, 95 S.W. 3d 651 (Tex. 2020) that a ban on a medical operation is not a classification based on sex simply because the operation is performed on individuals of a single sex.

**A. *Carolene Products*' Footnote 4 does not help plaintiffs**

Plaintiffs try hard to convince the court that transgenderism is a suspect class deserving heightened scrutiny by characterizing transgender people as a “discrete and insular group” – a recognized hallmark of a suspect class from the well-known footnote 4 of *United States v. Carolene Products Co.*, 304 U.S. 144 (1938). However, the Texas Constitution expressly lists which classifications are suspect. Texas voters ratified article 1, section 3a of the Texas Constitution in 1971, almost four decades after footnote 4 and the “discrete and insular group” language was written. They did not adopt such language then, and it is not employed in modern jurisprudence applications in relation to transgenderism. Instead, they meticulously specified that government cannot discriminate on the basis of “sex, race, color, creed, or national origin.” Tex. Const. art. I, § 3a (1972). Glaringly, transgenderism is not included in the list as a suspect classification.

The *Carolene Products* footnote states that a minority is entitled to judicial protection only when it is a “discrete and insular” minority that is the victim of “prejudice.” A reasonable definition, consistent with the general theory of the footnote – that political branches of

government have the primary responsibility for deciding disputed issues that arise in society - is that these are groups that are not able to play their proper role in democratic politics for some reason or another. *Felix Gilman: The Famous Footnote*. South Texas Law Review. Vol. 46:163

The footnote's objective seems to describe groups that are "discrete" in the sense that they are separate in some way, identifiable as distinct from the rest of society. They are "insular" in the sense that other groups will not form coalitions with them--and, critically, not because of a lack of common interests but because of prejudice.

The vast network of business, governmental, media, and nonprofit institutions that coalesce around transgender and LGBTQ issues statewide contradicts any argument of insularity or prejudice. The organizations joining to advocate against SB 14 included Lambda Legal, Move Texas Action Fund, Equality Texas, ACLU of Texas, Texas Association of School Psychologists, Texas Freedom Network, Planned Parenthood Texas, Texas Civil Rights Project, National Association of Social Workers – Texas Chapter, NAMI Texas, Texas

AFL-CIO, Texas Impact, AAUW, Children's Defense Fund – Texas, Texas American Federation of Teachers, Southwestern Texas Synod, Girls Empowerment Network, Every Texan, and hundreds of private individuals and churches. Indeed, when SB 14 was heard in legislative committee in the Texas Senate, over 5 times as many people registered against the bill as for it. Likewise, when Senate Bill 12 from the 88<sup>th</sup> Regular Session - another measure opposed by the LGBT community because of alleged detrimental effects on drag - was heard in committee at the Texas House, the LGBT community boasted that over 800 individuals registered against the legislation, with only 12 people registering in favor.

This, of course, does not signal overwhelming opposition to SB 14 or other legislation by the Texas population more generally. Majority votes in both chambers by elected representatives and the response to this very suit against an enacted law prove otherwise. However, government belongs to those who show up, and LGBT coalition members engaging in advocacy against SB 14 enjoyed tremendous cooperation and approval from many sectors including the media and liberal state lawmakers. This completely undercuts all claims of

“insularity” and political powerlessness by the Plaintiffs.

What may be even more relevant to the issue at hand is that, in assessing a suspect class, traditional jurisprudence focuses on the immutable characteristics of the class. *Glonn v. American Guar. & Liab. Ins. Co.*, 391 U.S. 73, 75 (1968); *Parham v. Hughes*, 441 U.S. 347, 352 (1979). “Sexual orientation,” unlike race and sex, and regardless of one’s unfounded belief that it is not a social construct (it is), certainly cannot be regarded as an immutable trait by definition. And even if, by some stretch, transgender adults were considered a discrete and insular class, SB 14 only prohibits gender treatments for children. Research has shown that that 80 to 95 percent of children with gender dysphoria will eventually come to embrace the bodily sex with which they were born. *See Paul R. McHugh, Paul Hruz, and Lawrence S. Mayer*, Brief of Amici Curiae in Support of Petitioner, *Gloucester County School Board v. G.G.*, U.S., No. 16-273 (January 10, 2017). Thus, it is far from clear that children meet any sort of immutability standard.

**B. Policy making is the Texas Legislature’s role, not the courts**

Neither the U.S. Supreme Court nor this court has recognized transgender status as a suspect class. Gender identity issues pose difficult line-drawing dilemmas for which the Texas Legislature is better suited to weigh through robust and vigorous debate. Age cutoffs for minors. Men in women's sports. Access to restroom facilities. All of these issues involve making policy judgements with public and expert input, often after prodigious discussion in an open forum.

Medical debates and evolving medical science in particular are suited for the legislative forum where medical and scientific experts can testify as invited witnesses or in their public capacity. Under the same reasoning, the legislative model is well-suited for testimonies of personal experience. For example, during SB 14's Senate committee debate, Walt Heyer, an outspoken detransitioner and expert on sex-change regret, described how he was conditioned to identify as female by a close family member.

All these issues are perfectly within the realm of the democratic process. State legislatures play a critical role in regulating health and

welfare and their efforts are usually “entitled to a strong presumption of validity.” *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, No. 19-1392, 597 U.S. 215 (2022).

## II. **SB14’s Ban of Gender Transitioning Procedures for Children Requires and Survives Strict Scrutiny**

Parental rights are well-established in Texas as being fundamental liberty interests requiring a strict scrutiny standard for governmental restrictions placed upon them. *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57, 66 (2000); *see also Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205, 214 (1972); *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510, 534-535 (1925). Under Texas law, these rights include the authority to make a child’s medical decisions. Tex. Fam. Code § 151.001(a)(6). There is no doubt that children cannot fully understand the permanent consequences of their decisions, or that parents know their children best and have hold their best interests at heart. Great deference is afforded to parental authority in the law, but it is not unlimited.

SB 14 is the rare example of how a statute correctly *limits* parental authority. “[W]e have recognized that a state is not without constitutional control over parental discretion in dealing with

children when their physical or mental health is jeopardized.”  
*Parham v. J.R.*, 442 U.S. 584, 603 (1979); *see also Prince v. Massachusetts*, 321 U.S. 158, 166 (1944). But even as it does so, SB 14 must undergo the highest level of scrutiny a law can endure – strict scrutiny; reserved for analyzing state intervention into most important and fundamental of rights. *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390, 400 (1923).

With this heightened level of scrutiny, it must be shown that a law’s alleged infringement on parental rights is “narrowly tailored to serve a compelling state interest.” *Washington v. Glucksberg*, 521 U.S. 702, 721 (1997) (noting the Fourteenth Amendment’s role in checking governmental restriction on fundamental liberty interests). Indeed, unwarranted state interference is a violation of the parents’ Fourteenth Amendment due process. *Id.*

We agree with the conclusion of the Family Freedom Project (FFP) that SB 14 survives the jurisprudential rigors of strict scrutiny. As a leading organization shepherding SB 14’s legislative passage, *amici* worked with Texas House and Senate authors to protect children

while meeting this constitutional standard. We will forgo an exhaustive discussion on compelling state interest. State intervention in parental decision making is usually reserved for circumstances that amount to child abuse or neglect. *Bowen v. American Hosp. Ass'n*, 476 U.S. 610 (1986). SB 14 is no exception to that rule. Briefing by the State and other *Amici Curiae* briefs submitted to this court cover this element extensively and effectively. There can be no doubt that protecting children from abuse is a compelling state interest.

SB 14 validly meets the “narrowly tailored” requirement. First, it has no effect whatsoever on adults seeking to transition their gender. The statute only bans medical procedures and treatments known by medical science to hurt children or implicate such an unreasonably large risk of bodily injury as to qualify as medical experimentation on children. This includes castration, mastectomies, hysterectomies, metoidioplasties, and vaginoplasties – all which pose exceedingly dangerous mental and physical health issues for children. Tex. Health and Safety Code § 161.702

Additionally, appropriate exceptions are included for “medically verifiable” sex development disorders such as Turner and Klinefelter syndromes, those with ambiguous external genitalia, and situations where genetic testing has determined abnormal chromosome structure. Finally, the bill provides a “tapering off” provision for minors already mid-treatment at the time of SB 14’s enactment to be safely transitioned off the dangerous drugs. The legislation expressly allows this process to be done in a “safe and medically appropriate” manner that “minimizes the risk of complications...”. Tex. Health and Safety Code § 161.703

The means-end analysis of the narrow tailoring requirement though, is grounded in the overarching purpose to minimize governmental intrusion on individual rights, and to protect constitutional norms such as the fundamental rights of parents to direct the care and upbringing of their children. SB 14 manages this crucial balance with sensible, thoughtful legislative crafting. As shown by other *Amici Curiae* briefs that extensively cite modern applications of peer-reviewed medical science and safe practices, the necessity for relief from these harmful interventions is great, and the

efficacy of alternative remedies does not exist. *United States v. Paradise*, 480 U.S. 149 (1987).

### CONCLUSION AND PRAYER FOR RELIEF

SB 14 upholds equal protection under Article 1, Section 3 of the Texas Constitution. SB 14 also narrowly regulates parental rights in regards to high risk medical interventions of an experimental nature on children. Texas Values respectfully prays that this Court vacate the temporary injunction and reverse the judgement of the district court, dismissing all claims.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Jonathan M. Saenz  
Jonathan M. Saenz  
Texas Bar Number: 24041845  
TEXAS VALUES  
1005 Congress Ave.  
Austin, TX 78701  
512.478.2220  
512.478.2229 (fax)  
[jsaenz@txvalues.org](mailto:jsaenz@txvalues.org)  
*Counsel for Amici Curiae*

## **CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE**

I certify that this document complies with TEX. R. APP. P. 9. It contains 2,993 words, as determined by the computer software's word count function, excluding the sections of the brief exempted by TEX. R. APP. P. 9.4(i)(1) and is proportionally spaced using Georgia Pro, 14-point font.

/s/ Jonathan M Saenz  
Jonathan M. Saenz  
Texas Values  
*Counsel for Amici Curiae*

## **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

The undersigned hereby certifies that a true and correct copy of the foregoing document was delivered to each party and/or their respective attorney of record on or before January 18, 2024, via electronic service in accordance with TEX. R. APP. P. 9.5.

/s/ Jonathan M Saenz  
Jonathan M. Saenz  
Texas Values  
*Counsel for Amici Curiae*

## Automated Certificate of eService

This automated certificate of service was created by the eFiling system. The filer served this document via email generated by the eFiling system on the date and to the persons listed below:

Jonathan Covey on behalf of Jonathan Saenz

Bar No. 24041845

jcovey@txvalues.org

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Alliance in Support of Texas

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Associated Case Party: Office of the Attorney General

Name	BarNumber	Email	TimestampSubmitted	Status
Lanora Pettit		lanora.pettit@oag.texas.gov	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Judd E.Stone		judd.stone@oag.texas.gov	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT

### Case Contacts

Name	BarNumber	Email	TimestampSubmitted	Status
Kennon L.Wooten		kwooten@scottdoug.com	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Angela Goldberg		agoldberg@scottdoug.com	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Charles Kenneth Eldred	793681	Charles.Eldred@oag.texas.gov	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Paul Castillo	24049461	pcastillo@lambdalegal.org	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Johnathan Stone	24071779	Johnathan.Stone@oag.texas.gov	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Allissa Aileen Pollard	24065915	allissa.pollard@arnoldporter.com	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Adriana Pinon	24089768	apinon@aclutx.org	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Brian Klosterboer	24107833	bklosterboer@aclutx.org	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Maria Williamson		maria.williamson@oag.texas.gov	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Natalie Thompson		natalie.thompson@oag.texas.gov	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Lauren Ditty		lditty@scottdoug.com	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Valeria Alcocer		valeria.alcocer@oag.texas.gov	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Susie Smith		ssmith@scottdoug.com	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Jordan Kadjar		jkadjar@scottdoug.com	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Karen L.Loewy		kloewy@lambdalegal.org	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Sasha J.Buchert		sbuchert@lambdalegal.org	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Harper Seldin		hseldin@aclu.org	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Lynly S. Egyes		lynly@transgenderlawcenter.org	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT

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Jonathan Covey on behalf of Jonathan Saenz  
Bar No. 24041845  
jcovey@txvalues.org  
Envelope ID: 83521962  
Filing Code Description: Amicus Brief  
Filing Description: Amici Curiae Brief of Texas Values and Family Policy Alliance in Support of Texas  
Status as of 1/18/2024 9:50 AM CST

#### Case Contacts

Lynly S. Egyes		lynly@transgenderlawcenter.org	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Milo Inglehart		milo@transgenderlawcenter.org	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Shawn Meerkamper		shawn@transgenderlawcenter.org	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Dale Melchert		dale@transgenderlawcenter.org	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Elizabeth Gill		egill@aclunc.org	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Lori B.Leskin		lori.leskin@arnoldporter.com	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Omar Gonzalez-Pagan		ogonzalez-pagan@lambdalegal.org	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Chloe Kempf		ckempf@aclutx.org	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Heather Dyer	24123044	heather.dyer@oag.texas.gov	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Grace Ojionuka		grace.ojionuka@arnoldporter.com	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT

#### Associated Case Party: Texas Public Policy Foundation

Name	BarNumber	Email	TimestampSubmitted	Status
Yvonne Simental		ysimental@texaspolicy.com	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Robert Henneke		rhenneke@texaspolicy.com	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Christian Townsend		ctownsend@texaspolicy.com	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Chance DWeldon		cweldon@texaspolicy.com	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT

#### Associated Case Party: Spero Law LLC

Name	BarNumber	Email	TimestampSubmitted	Status
Christopher Mills		cmills@spero.law	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT

#### Associated Case Party: Burke Law Group

---

---

### Automated Certificate of eService

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Bar No. 24041845  
jcovey@txvalues.org  
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Status as of 1/18/2024 9:50 AM CST

Associated Case Party: Burke Law Group

Name	BarNumber	Email	TimestampSubmitted	Status
Jeff Hall		jeff@burkegroup.law	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Jill Carvalho		jill@burkegroup.law	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Stephanie Gottsch		stephanie@burkegroup.law	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT
Marcella Burke		marcella@burkegroup.law	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT

Associated Case Party: Family Freedom Project

Name	BarNumber	Email	TimestampSubmitted	Status
Chris L. Branson		chrisbranson@cpsdefense.com	1/18/2024 9:38:46 AM	SENT