

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Jalisa Broussard](#)
Subject: FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Private/Before Publication)
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From: sunset.website@brightleafgroup.com <sunset.website@brightleafgroup.com>
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To: Sunset Advisory Commission <sunset@sunset.texas.gov>
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Private/Before Publication)

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Submitted by: Visitor

Submitted values are:

Choose the agency that you would like to provide input about
[Texas Workforce Commission](#)

Public Comments

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Title

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Your Comments or Concerns

lead a statewide network called the Texas Opportunity Youth Network comprised of communities across the state of Texas who have built regional collaboratives and pathways to reconnect our state's opportunity youth and young adults (young people from their mid-teens to mid-twenties who are unplugged from school, work and any postsecondary education or career training).

Across the state an estimated 500,000 young adults are living this experience, 1 in 10 of our nation's opportunity youth is Texan. Although the highest concentrations of opportunity youth are in our urban areas, the highest rates of disconnection lie in our rural communities requiring a tailored approach that cultivates both workforce and economic development simultaneously. TOYN communities are home to over 350,000 of these youth and young adults.

Reconnecting opportunity youth to school and work stands to return as much as \$34 billion to the state of Texas every single year in increased earnings and reduced need to access social services. These young people represent a critical resource in our talent pipeline that we are losing due to challenges they face in their lives.

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is one of the most important agencies to provide services to opportunity youth, but not the only one. In addition to TEA and THECB, we know that many Texas opportunity youth engage with HHSC, DFPS, TJJD (all up for sunset this term, as well). Internally, we know also that departments within TWC are prioritizing this population to provide tailored support to meet the unique needs of young adults still stepping into their personal responsibility and maturity.

In addition, SB 1143 which passed last year requires that local workforce boards demonstrate transparency in how they are spending their funding earmarked for youth and young adults and to include this population in their annual strategic plan. Currently, there is no plan to baseline and measure progress toward accountability, or to develop an evaluation to determine if this bill will have the intended effect of improving services to youth and young adults throughout the state.

When we talk to our young adults about the challenges they face as they engage with these agencies to access supports the following constraints top their list:

1. challenges to locating the documentation to prove eligibility
2. lack of internal and cross-agency coordination leading to
 - . redundancy in application and intake processes
 - . referrals that lead no where
 - . lack of communication, difficulty reaching a person to help guide the process
 - . no single lead to help case manage the unique aspects of individual cases

Your Proposed Solution

As a result, TOYN recommends that TWC create an Opportunity Youth Ombudsman role that would oversee both intra-agency and interagency coordination to create more effective services (such as SNAP E & T) and align resources to optimize direct support for this population.

- This role would head an interagency committee to support this population, as well as develop effective communication channels across the local workforce boards to help ensure transparency and optimization of resources to support opportunity youth.
- This role would also be charged to develop a protocol through Texas Education Agency and the Texas Education Exchange to automate the collection of documentation to prove eligibility, given that the majority of Texas opportunity youth will have engaged with TEA and been required to supply similar documentation

In addition, we recommend that as we consider the data infrastructure's much needed changes, we include

- defining the term "opportunity youth" and
- developing measures and data that can identify opportunity youth and young adults and track the re-engagement progress for opportunity youth and young adults across agencies.

Finally, we would like to see much deeper coordination with HHSC on SNAP E & T with greater attention to optimizing the use of these funds for short term workforce training programs offered by our local community colleges – another critical institution for these young adults who are seeking meaningful work and careers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

My Comments Will Be Made Public

Yes