

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Dawn Roberson](#)
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Friday, June 06, 2014 8:18:29 AM

-----Original Message-----

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2014 10:47 PM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Thursday, June 5, 2014 - 22:46

Agency: DEPARTMENT AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES DADS

First Name: Brenda

Last Name: McGahagin

Title:

Organization you are affiliated with:

City: Austin

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed: I am very concerned about the recommendation to close State Supported Living Centers (SSLC) and especially the abrupt decision related to the Austin State Supported Living Center. Requiring families to move their family member to an alternate living situation when appropriate options do not exist is stressful for all concerned and frankly seems inhumane, especially related to the time frame imposed. Many of the individuals to be relocated are medically fragile or require such close attention that many group or community homes are unwilling to accept them. It reminds me of the situation that families with special needs encounter when they seek an appropriate school for their child. Privately run schools often will not accept such students, but public schools must. Privileged families can afford the costly tuition of the unique school that offers needed services whereas average families cannot. By closing the State Supported Living Centers, Texas is leaving families without a public option. The Austin metropolitan area is a large catchment area and one that needs a facility staffed with medically trained caregivers. Community and group homes often do not employ skilled staff and training is minimal or inadequate. Many are not handicap accessible. Oversight is frighteningly absent. Pay for employees of group homes is likely to be worse than that for SSLC employees, likely no benefits will be provided. It is not a secret that to recruit skilled staff the pay must be adequate or commitment and care suffers. Low pay means high turnover, constant training and retraining and inconsistent care, not to mention poor morale. The same will be true in community/group homes without adequately paid staff. The Austin SSLC direct care staff have not been adequately paid and the problem will persist with other types of providers. Add to that the profitability factor and I fear that penny pinching will result in problems never before seen with SSLCs. For instance one not so easily detected place to save money is to slash the food budget. It is simply not possible to profit in such an operation without cutting corners and I fear this will result in inadequate care, and possibly neglect. The move to a group/community setting will require extensive funding for adequate oversight and newly developed and thorough regulations. Many of the individuals served are not able to articulate what they need. It is the states responsibility, and we as citizens responsibility, to take care of people who are so vulnerable and who may no longer have a family member to advocate for them.

Many of the people living at the Austin SSLC have been there for years. It is their home, the people who care for them their family, institutional or not.

Assuming that your or my idea of what constitutes a home is the only right version of home is presumptuous. That said, clearly the age of the buildings at the Austin SSLC are problematic and costly to maintain. Certainly the property is valuable, as are several other state owned properties in Austin and in other metropolitan areas housing SSLCs. Other options to complete closure exist and we should consider more thoughtful solutions. Maintaining the Austin property in state ownership affords a source of long term lease income to the state. A new medical home for medically fragile SSLC individuals on the property would keep them near their family who reside in the area. A similar arrangement could be made at other SSLC locations where sale of property and closure will be considered.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: Maintain the property where the Austin SSLC resides under state ownership, lease it and include in the plan for the tract a new medical home for medically vulnerable residents of the SSLC and several properly, highly regulated group homes (as all should be) in addition to other development, if necessary. The state has negotiated acceptable well planned developments before. The Austin Triangle development and the Central Market development are two excellent examples and the majority of the property is still state owned. Increase the pay of caregivers and ancillary staff to adequately and fairly compensate them for the unique and demanding care they provide, which will save money in the long term by reducing turnover and training and result in more consistent care for our vulnerable citizens. A similar arrangement should be considered at any potential SSLC facing closure and sale of property. It is in the long term best interest of the state to maintain ownership of such property while leveraging income through lease arrangement.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree