

Brandy Borque



November 11, 2014

Dear Sunset Commission,

My name is Brandy Borque and I am here from Dallas representing the Texas Rehabilitation Association. The Texas Rehabilitation Association, or TRA, is an organization comprised of around 139 members composed of vocational rehabilitation counselors, educators, doctors, people with disabilities and other stakeholders in rehabilitation. We are the state chapter of the National Rehabilitation Association, or NRA, who is currently reviewing the proposed consolidation at the national level and has submitted a detailed response outside of this statement.

I am here today to oppose Issue #1, which proposes to consolidate the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitation Services (DARS) with other HHSC agencies. TRA believes the consolidation will affect the quality of service delivery and, as others have also expressed, that consolidation will endanger the nearly \$240 million in federal funding that Texans with Disabilities receive.

I am currently a candidate for a Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. I came to the field of rehab counseling after my father become ill and lost the one thing that defined him his whose life, his career. My parents live in a rural area and trained counselors, particularly in the vocational realm, were not readily available to help my dad deal with the emotional aspects of losing one career or to help him train for another. My Dad ended up at UTSW Medical Center where his life was not only saved but we learned of vocational rehabilitation and the benefits it could provide. I began the Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling program at UTSW and I currently work PT for a DARS provider and have seen first-hand the fantastic results people with disabilities can achieve. As the National Rehabilitation's response to Sunset states: "The counselor is far more than a technician; VR counselors provide encouragement, support and inspiration to people on whom the rest of society has often given up." The TRA fears that consolidation, as proposed, will dismantle a system that has made a positive impact on the lives of Texans with Disabilities and put VR in the hands of less specialized providers in the future.

As stakeholders in public VR, the Texas Rehabilitation Association recommends retaining the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Service as a separate division. Thank you for allowing me to speak.

Respectfully yours,

Brandy Borque, Representing TRA

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