

OCT 17 2014

October 16, 2014

Mr. Ken Levine
Director
Sunset Advisory Commission
1501 North Congress, 6th Floor
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Mr. Levine:

The Aging and Disability Services Council would like to thank you, both for the opportunity to respond to the *Health and Human Services Commission Staff Report* and for the tremendous efforts on the part of your staff in undertaking a thorough and thoughtful review of the complex health and human services system.

The Council met on October 14, 2014, to discuss the report. Our comments and concerns as stated below are based on our knowledge and experience from the perspective of working with the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS). We have not, as a group, worked with other system agencies; therefore, we rely on the advice and good judgment of the Governor's Office and the Legislature in making and implementing these recommendations for the benefit of all components of the health and human services system and those Texans it serves.

Issue 1: The Creation of a Consolidated Health and Human Services Commission

The Aging and Disability Services Council is generally in favor of consolidation along functional lines and can see many potential benefits to a functional structure. We would advocate that all system agencies be equally involved in developing the transition plan referenced in Recommendation 1.2, to ensure that the final work plan addresses all programs within the system. A concern was also raised that the functional organization be carried out in such a way that there is still clear leadership and collaboration between the aging and disability populations. If services for those who are aging and services for those with disabilities are separated organizationally, critical coordination may be lost, potentially to the detriment of those receiving both types of services. It is the Council's hope that planning efforts consider these challenges and ensure accountable, coordinated leadership.

Issue 2: The Consolidation of Administrative Support Services

The Aging and Disability Services Council is generally in favor of the consolidation of administrative support services and can readily see how such a consolidation might be of benefit to the agencies and to those who receive their services. Regarding Recommendation 2.6 (governing consolidation of rate setting), a concern was raised that the division responsible for administering aging and disability services retain sufficient input into the rate-setting process to ensure that the rates for these services are flexible and respond to the changing needs of service providers and that the rates set are adequate to meet the needs of individuals receiving services.

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Again, the Aging and Disability Services Council understands and supports the need for restructuring the health and human services enterprise and believes that this effort has great potential to benefit those who navigate our systems to receive or provide services. We trust that the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the Commission will carry out this restructuring in a thoughtful, collaborative, and inclusive manner that does not dilute the critical role that the services carried out by DADS have in the lives of older Texans and those with disabilities.

Sincerely,



John A. Cuellar, Chair
Ann Schneider, Vice Chair
Barry L. Anderson
Glyn S. Crane
Judy Foster
Sheri Harmonson
J. Russell Shannon
Donna Stauber
Edward E. Yosowitz, M.D.

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