



November 10, 2014

Dawn Buckingham, M.D.  
Public Member  
Texas Sunset Advisory Commission  
Austin, TX

Dear Dr. Buckingham:

It is our understanding that the Sunset Advisory Commission recommends the removal of 32 of 35 advisory committees from statute, as some are considered unnecessary, duplicative, or inactive. We are writing to urge you to retain the Texas Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Council (TBIAC) in statute in light of its critical role in meeting the needs of persons with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and their caregivers in Texas. As researchers and clinicians with years of experience of working with individuals TBI at TIRR Memorial Hermann, currently the #3 ranked rehabilitation hospital in the nation (U.S. News & World Report), we are well qualified to highlight the need for the continued existence of the TBIAC in Texas statute. The TBIAC was established into statute by the 78<sup>th</sup> legislature in 2003 and continues to function as a necessary, non-duplicative, and very active advisory council.

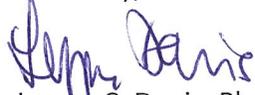
The TBIAC exists to meet the needs of the 144,000 Texans who sustain TBI annually and is the only advisory council in TX dedicated to serving this population. Its broad membership representation, including professional, public consumer, and state agency members, renders it very well equipped to serve the many needs of individuals with TBI. The TBIAC is charged with informing state leaders about issues related to meeting the needs of persons with TBI and formulating associated reports and recommendations. For example, the TBIAC assists with improving access to information, education, and resources to persons with TBI and identifying gaps in services. In our work as federally funded TBI researchers and clinicians, we routinely work with injured individuals who either lack knowledge about available resources or have difficulty accessing them. Many require a broad range of services, including medical care, rehabilitation, vocational assistance, transportation assistance, and mental health services. Cognitive deficits are common after TBI, which compound the problem of service acquisition. The TBIAC fulfills a critical role by assisting with the generation of a variety of resource- and education-focused documents, including resource-focused brochures, concussion education cards, and TBI wallet identification cards. The TBIAC's promotion of TBI-related resources, such

as vocational rehabilitation services, is integral toward helping injured individuals maximize their level of functioning and improve return to work outcomes.

The TBIAC has a long history of contributing to numerous reports to inform state leaders about the needs of persons with TBI, including the following: Needs Assessment Report (1999), Policy Analysis (1999), Gaps in Service (1999), Statewide Action Plan of Supports and Services (1999), Executive Summary – Putting the Pieces Together (2001), Executive Summary – Acquired Brain Injury and Long Term Care in Texas (2006), Sunset Advisory Commission: Study of Health Benefit Plan Coverage for Brain injuries (2006), House Bill 1919 Brochure: Insurance Coverage Requirements for Post-Acute Care and Cognitive Rehabilitation (2006), Report to the Governor (2007), Needs and Resources Assessment Report (2008), Feasibility Study for Providing Community Support and Residential Services for Individuals with Acquired Brain Injury (2009), Brain Injury Handbook for Disaster Preparedness and Response Management Teams and Brain Injury Survivors, Family Members and Caregivers (2010), and Traumatic Brain Injury Resource Document: Re-Entry of Students with TBI to the School Setting (2012). The TBIAC also contributed to the development of educational DVDs on TBI and held the First Texas Summit on Brain Injury in Austin (2013). Current activities include production of a Report to the Governor and planning of a TBI statewide needs and assessment.

In sum, the TBIAC is the only advisory council in TX dedicated to meeting the many needs of individuals with TBI and their caregivers. It remains a very active and productive body that is well equipped to serve persons with TBI through its numerous education- and resource-focused activities. These endeavors contribute to improved community participation for injured persons. The proposed elimination of the TBIAC would yield a substantial detriment to individuals with TBI and their caregivers. Please note that several Council members will testify on the TBIAC's behalf at the upcoming meeting on Thursday, November 13. As leaders in TBI rehabilitation and research, we respectfully request that you provide your full support for the continued existence of the TBIAC in Texas statute. Please feel free to contact us at (713) 797-7109 if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,



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