

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Janet Wood](#)
Subject: FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Wednesday, April 25, 2018 7:27:32 AM

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

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Tuesday, April 24, 2018 10:17 PM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Agency: TEXAS MEDICAL BOARD

First Name: John

Last Name: Fitzwater

Title: MD

Organization you are affiliated with:

Email:

City: Austin

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed:

I am a former medical director of the Texas Physician Health Program, having served in that role from February 2014 - March 2017. The program and others of its kind throughout the United States, Canada and other parts of the world serves an important role in ensuring the safety of patients and promoting the health of our physician population. Physicians are not immune to the same sorts of diseases that impact other members of society and should be afforded the opportunity to maintain their careers while seeking treatment for illnesses, including mental health conditions and substance use disorders.

A reasonable level of funding is essential in order for the program to provide services that will lead to more physicians and PA's seeking help before they are mandated to do so. More outreach, therapeutic programming and better coordination with hospitals, medical schools and practice groups will lead to identification, treatment, monitoring and successful reintegration into practice of affected providers. This in turn will positively impact the safety of Texas citizens while protecting the state's substantial monetary investment in our provider workforce.

Currently, the program is supported through participant fees and operates on a budget of approximately \$550,000 per year. That amount is woefully inadequate considering that there are nearly 100,000 physicians, medical residents, PA's, and medical and PA students in this state. It costs as much to educate and train a handful of physicians as the state allocates to a program that potentially impacts the safety of 27 million people.

The Sunset Advisory Commission identified funding inadequacy as a barrier to the program meeting it's mission. However, the Commission's only recommendation to address this inadequacy is to allow the program to accept gifts, grants and donations. That is simply not a sufficient solution and fails to recognize the significant benefit to the state and the citizens of Texas that this program provides.

I recommend that the legislature take the following action in support of the

program:

1. implement recommendation 5.2 authorizing the program to accept gifts, grants and donations
2. designate a portion of the excess funds collected through the licensure process to go to support the Texas Physician Health Program, rather than diverting those funds to General Revenue;
3. authorize staffing levels that are adequate to meet the programs mission
4. remove the SB 202 licensees from the pool of eligible licensees.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: See above comments, recommendations 2-4.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree