

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Cecelia Hartley](#)
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
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-----Original Message-----

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Wednesday, October 15, 2014 11:32 PM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Wednesday, October 15, 2014 - 23:31

Agency: HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION HHSC

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- Texas Chapter

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

Comments Regarding the Sunset Commission's Report on The Health and Human Services Commission

The National Association of Social Workers/Texas Chapter (NASW/Texas) approves of the Sunset Commission's overall efforts to ensure that services are streamlined and that collaboration occurs between the various divisions. It is encouraging to see that by reshaping the organization along functional lines the Sunset Commission recognizes the value in communication among providers. As long as this is truly a first step towards true wrap around services for consumers NASW/TX is supportive of the changes.

However, there are concerns that this new structure will not guarantee cost savings for the agency and that the internal organization still has the potential to create distinct silos of service delivery. We are hesitant to say that the new agency actually goes far enough in creating a paradigm shift among the various areas of focus. Public Health Services and Medical and Social Services still reside under separate divisions per the organization chart, and yet actually combining Regional and local health services and Public benefit programs would yield a much more integrated approach to care.

If the goal is to cut the waste that comes from multiple agencies delivering overlapping services due to their lack of knowledge, then the new agency should strive to blend services, delivery and structure into a seamless whole.

We know that physical health and behavioral health are directly linked to each other and need to be addressed as interlocking parts. As an example, depression often manifests as physical discomfort, and a physician with this knowledge and direct resources available for referral will impact the well-being of an individual immensely. By creating a system that places a person's well being on a continuum of services rather than separate points of entry,

exit and re-entry, we will see healthier people and more targeted interventions that will ultimately save our state millions of dollars.

Another major gap left by the report was the placement of the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners. The Sunset's Commission's Report on the Department of State Health Services ultimately recommended leaving the board within that department and rejected moving it to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation. The licensing boards are only mentioned in regards to duplicative background checks done by the Office of the Inspector General. This report does not indicate where it will be placed, and lists no guidance as to what division it should be placed under. If the current structure remains, we would like to see the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners placed under Medical and Social Services. Furthermore, investigations due to licensing complaints take about a year on average due to low staff at the board, and we would like to see more of the licensing fees go directly to the board. A greater revenue split between the General Revenue Fund and the board, with the board being funded at a higher level than it is currently, would greatly reduce the wait for a hearing and strengthen the social work workforce.

Social Workers are integral to the design of the Health and Human Services Commission. Our profession serves at every level: from direct services to supervision to policy. We are on the front lines assisting with basic needs and we are at the highest administrative levels ensuring that the agency continues in its mission to serve Texans. We want to ensure that this new bureaucratic structure is not just functional but truly collaborative. We applaud the efforts of the Sunset Commission and the work of the legislature, but experience shows us that without a true dedication to outcomes that involve a completely integrated agency approach, fragmentation will invariably occur. In 2002, HB 2292 created the divisions within HHSC that this report is seeking to remediate with the full intention of creating a better service delivery approach for our communities. If that work is being deemed a wrong direction, it is our sincere hope that the new course will fundamentally change the way the agency operates as well as the manner in which it is organized.

We also take issue with the cost savings calculations in the report. When HB 2292 was passed there were cost savings projections made that were wildly inaccurate. In fact, to this day the cost savings of HB 2292 is nil, it has cost the state monies to reorganize. We believe that this will also be the outcome of the proposed restructuring of HHSC. While we understand that there are costs to reorganization, but to say there will be cost savings is not responsible nor diligent.

NASW/Texas stands ready to provide input and support to any organizational questions that might arise. We represent over 5,700 social workers in Texas, and have a vested interest in ensuring that the new HHSC is able to utilize many of them to their full potential. For more information, please contact Government Relations Director Will Francis at wfrancis@naswtx.org or (512) 474-1454.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: If the current structure remains, we would like to see the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners placed under Medical and Social Services. Furthermore, investigations due to licensing complaints take about a year on average due to low staff at the board, and we would like to see more of the licensing fees go directly to the board. A greater revenue split between the General Revenue Fund and the board, with the board being funded at a higher level than it is currently, would greatly reduce the wait for a hearing and strengthen the social work workforce.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree