

**To:** Sunset Commission, Austin, TX

My name is Stephen Freeman, I live in Houston, TX and I make this statement on behalf of the Texas Rehab Action Network (TRAN).

**I oppose the Sunset Report's Issue 1, which proposes to consolidate DARS with other HHS agencies and offer an alternative.**

I am a Service Connected Disabled Veteran who has been in the Veteran Administration's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, and my business has served as a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) provider, and is a vendor for DARS, our state VR program. Having been in both positions I can offer a unique perspective on VR from a national view, state view, as a consumer of services and as a vendor to a VR agency.

My military services has given me the gifts of, PTSD, TBI, Chronic Migraine headaches, Sleep Apnea and a host of other ailments that make my life, and the lives of my family members, a constant challenge. Finding and maintaining employment has been extremely difficult, to say the least, until I found DARS. As a referral from my own VR counselor at the VA, I began doing business as a vendor for DARS in 2011. Working as a CRP provider gives me the flexibility to create my own schedule, maintain my status in the community as a professional, and has allowed me to provide for my 4 children. I am able to work, and build my future and help other Texans with disabilities as a vendor for DARS, when I was not able to maintain other employment.

In my dealings with the VA, as a consumer of their services, I was quite frustrated. The culture there is one of bureaucracy, and denial of services. There is a game afoot in the VA, where participants are not told the rules but are still judged by them, as they are CONSISTANTLY denied help.

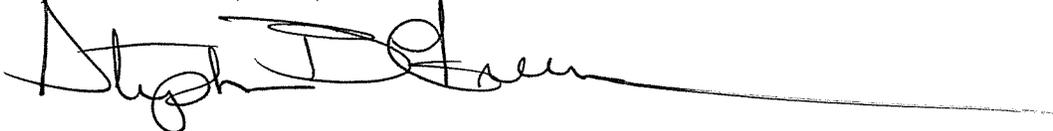
DARS is an organization that operates in a much different fashion. DARS is an organization that has empowered workers to make decisions and moves quickly to assist its consumers meet their employment goals. It is an organization that is about results and not bureaucracy.

I am opposed to the Sunset Report's Issue 1 for a few reasons that I have listed below:

- According to the RSA regulations, the restructuring puts Federal VR funding at risk and could further burden taxpayers to foot the bill.
- Access to services for Texans with Disabilities will become more difficult for a group of people who things are already difficult enough. People with disabilities have very unique challenges and there must staff in place who are sensitive to this.
- DARS is a successful VR agency and lumping them with other agencies hinders that success.

Thank you, Sunset Commission, for allowing me to speak.

Stephen Freeman, MBA, USN Retired

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Freeman", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.