



Testimony to the Sunset Advisory Commission

Thursday, November 13, 2014

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Dear Committee Members,

TNOYS was founded in 1979 to support and strengthen the organizations that provide services to children and youth in at-risk situations and their families. Our members provide services including family counseling, emergency shelter, residential treatment, youth development, and child abuse and neglect prevention services.

Many of our members have contracts with the PEI division at DFPS to provide services that prevent child abuse and neglect and juvenile delinquency.

We were extremely impressed by the thoughtfulness with which the Sunset Commission completed its review of DFPS and we strongly support many of the Commission's recommendations, including its recommendations to elevate PEI. We have been very pleased by the Department's continued investment in PEI, including as a result of that report, and we are extremely excited about the momentum that has been building to further strengthen a division in which the services are already very strong.

We were relieved to see that Sunset again recommended keeping PEI within DFPS in its report on HHSC and we are here today to state that regardless of what happens with the health and human services enterprise, **we agree with the Sunset Commission that it is imperative for PEI to remain within DFPS.**

DFPS has built strong relationships with the organizations that provide PEI services over the last thirty years. Many of the agencies that are contracted by the Department to provide prevention and early intervention services are also contracted to provide other services on the child welfare continuum, including residential services such as emergency shelter. This is important because it means these agencies have the flexibility to provide services for families regardless of their specific situations, and it means that families are able to identify PEI contractors as "one stop shops" for child welfare services in their communities. DFPS recently rolled out a new initiative called Alternative Response to provide support services for families on the brink of entering foster care. In order for this initiative to function fully on limited resources, the Department may need to leverage services being provided through contracts with PEI.

We agree with the Sunset Commission that the most appropriate place for child abuse and neglect prevention programs is under the direction of those charged with protecting children



from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. We are also opposed to efforts to fix something that is not broken.

Our members provide prevention services in every county of the state and they will be visiting your offices over the next few months to emphasize the importance of protecting PEI. We look forward to working with you to protect these important services for the children, youth, and families in our great state.

Thank you.