

Members of the Sunset Commission:

Good afternoon, I am here to give comment about the Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities, an HHSC office.

I have been involved with TOPDD for more than 15 years and have served as a member of the executive committee since 2009. I am also part of the Development Team at Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children in Dallas and I am here to share information regarding the financial implications for TOPDD based on the recommendations of the report. The report recommends that TOPDD's functions be subsumed into HHSC and lose its executive committee and independence. As a development professional, I can categorically state that if these recommendations are implemented, it will be nearly impossible for this Office to have the ability to attract private funding.

The public /private partnership of TOPDD is unique and is what makes us successful. By establishing and building relationships through the executive committee, TOPDD has built strategic partnerships and has brought in millions of dollars to prevent Developmental Disabilities. These private funds have offset the need for the state to make a significant investment into this work. On average, only 19% of the money in TOPDD's budget has come from the state. I think we can say with confidence that the state has not had to make a compromising investment in the work the Office executes.

The current recommendations made do not call for the office to be in statute and would eliminate the current Rider in place for TOPDD. This Rider is important because it allows the donations the Office receives to straddle fiscal years. The elimination of the Rider means that funding that the Office currently has invested in projects will no longer be earmarked for what the donors intended. As a member of the executive committee, I have a fiduciary responsibility to honor the donor intent for funds provided to TOPDD.

I feel it is critical for you all to know that the work done by TOPDD is impressive as the Office has not only raised the funds necessary to execute the mission of preventing developmental disabilities but more importantly has developed community support and collaboration. If the functions and funding of TOPDD are subsumed into HHSC the community support that has been established will likely dissipate and our ability to raise private funds could be impeded ... two things that I truly believe everyone in this room would be disappointed to see happen.

I urge you to support the independent yet connected structure of the TOPDD office that enables us to work effectively toward preventing developmental disabilities, as our funders desire and intend.

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