

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Cecelia Hartley](#)
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Wednesday, October 15, 2014 8:05:57 AM

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

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Tuesday, October 14, 2014 8:37 PM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Tuesday, October 14, 2014 - 20:36

Agency: HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION HHSC

First Name: Paul

Last Name: Hunt

Title:

Organization you are affiliated with: Austin Council Of The Blind

Email:

City: Austin

State: Texas

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

I represent the Austin Council of the Blind and we appose recommendation 1.1 which would eliminate the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services agency and its Division for Blind Services and merge it into the Health and Human Services agency. In this agency, divisions would be organized according to function. Services for Blind and Visually Impaired people would be performed by the Medical and Social Services Division. Members of the Blind community believe that under this organization, Blind and Visually Impaired people would not get the attention and specialized services that they need.

I understand what the Sunset Staff is recommending in issue 13.1. This recommendation would change the statute and delegate the authority of establishing advisory councils to the commissioner of HHSC. Statutory provisions should be provided to ensure that the commissioner appoints members to the advisory councils who either have disabilities or serve as their recognized advocates.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: I recommend that the Sunset Commission defer any further reorganization of DARS or DBS and direct the sunset staff to study the impact of this type of organizational change that has been implemented in other states. Consult with the American Council of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind affiliates in those states and determine how well the population has been served under the type of organization being proposed for Texas.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree

Paul Hunt

Paul Hunt

Texas Sunset Commission Testimony

November 13, 2014

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I received services from the Division for Blind Services in Michigan and from the Division for Blind Services in Texas. These services enabled me to hold gainful employment and pay taxes for nearly forty years.

I oppose the adoption of recommendation 1.1 which consolidates the present five HHS system agencies, including the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, into a single agency. This consolidation would create a system that makes rehabilitation services for blind and visually impaired people much more difficult to get.

The nature of rehabilitation services for blind and visually impaired persons requires specially trained rehabilitation professionals and an agency management support team who understands the specific circumstances and challenges faced by individuals who experience vision loss. The proposed organizational structure that places rehabilitation services under a generic organization like "medical and social services" would limit availability of the specialized services that blind and visually impaired people need to succeed in the highly competitive job market in Texas. Attempts in other states to consolidate agencies and agency missions have had a detrimental impact on services to blind and visually impaired individuals.

I ask that the Sunset Commission amend this recommendation to allow the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services to continue as a stand-alone agency dedicated to empowering Blind and Visually impaired people to obtain gainful employment and pay their fair

share of taxes like I did for nearly forty years.