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PUBLIC TESTIMONY TO SUNSET ADVISORY COMMISSION
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What is it like to lose your sight? Close your eyes for a moment and imagine that you are blind. You no longer can see the faces of your family. You can't drive your car. You can't read the papers in front of you. You're afraid. If you get up and try to walk to the door, you may trip and fall. How are you going to do your job now that you can't see? How will you read your mail? Fry an egg? Pour a cup of coffee? Resume a normal life? Being blind is just too much. Some people when they go blind even think about ending their life. It's a devastating and frightening experience to lose your sight.

You need help. You need help from someone who understands your fear, your panic, your sense of hopelessness and despair. You need the help of someone who has been professionally trained, someone who can provide you with the special tools, technology and training that you need to learn to successfully live with your blindness.

Some states have tried consolidating their rehabilitation agencies, and the result have been less services to blind persons. Inadequately trained personnel can put blind people at risk of injury, impoverishment, even death, due to their inability to properly help them cope with their blindness.

The special type of rehabilitation for people who lose their sight is best accomplished by a specialized agency like DARS Division for Blind Services.

About Issue 3: There are, in Texas, nearly 400 thousand seniors who are legally blind. It's a devastating and traumatic experience to lose your sight as an older adult. People who experience vision loss late in life need the help of professionally trained staff, special orientation and travel training, and specific independent living aids and technology in order to live independently and stay out of a nursing home.

The staff at the 27 Centers for Independent Living are just not trained or prepared to provide the type of specialized services needed by newly blind seniors.

This is not the time to reduce funding or cut staff for DARS DBS Older Blind Independent Living Services program. To the contrary. We need to increase funding for this program who ensure that your parents or grand-parents who are experiencing vision loss do not have to go into a nursing home prematurely because they can no longer see. We need to tell them that there is life after loss of sight, thank to DARS Division for Blind Services. Thank you.