

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Janet Wood](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)  
**Date:** Thursday, April 12, 2018 2:42:34 PM

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

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]  
Sent: Thursday, April 12, 2018 1:35 PM  
To: Sunset Advisory Commission  
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Agency: TEXAS STATE BOARD EXAMINERS PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS

First Name: Ian

Last Name: Lertora

Title: Assistant Professor

Organization you are affiliated with: Texas Tech

Email:

City: Lubbock

State: Texas

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

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the latest Sunset Review findings. I am a licensed professional counselor-intern and a counselor educator in Lubbock Texas. As an active member in the mental health provider community and in the counselor education community I serve the city of Lubbock by providing FREE counseling services to impoverished people in our community and also train the future of the counseling profession through my position at a university

In short, I am very invested and have a deep love for my profession and the good work we do.

I agree with your finding that the continued administrative attachment of the marriage and family therapy, professional counseling and social work boards to a large agency is still not working. They are underfunded and understaffed. The dysfunction created by such a model places the livelihoods of licensees in jeopardy and puts the public at risk.

I support the staff recommendation that the consolidated agency [TSBEMFT, TSBEPC, TSBSWE and TSBEP] structure of the Behavioral Health Executive Council presents the best approach to align the regulation of these behavioral health professions and elevate the attention and oversight of these programs and that more efficient and effective regulation of these professions will not only provide improved services and increased responsiveness to licensees but also will better protect behavioral health care consumers.

I disagree with the staff recommendation that the executive council would be composed of one public member appointed by each of the four boards and an independent presiding officer appointed by the governor. I believe you should follow Texas Counseling Association's recommendation that the structure of BHEC, as proposed during the last Sunset Review, should include one professional and one public member appointed by each board, with the presiding officer appointed by the Governor. My opinion is based on the following:

- None of the boards that regulate health professionals is composed exclusively of public members. In fact, the Sunset Commission staff recommendations for the Board of Medical Examiners does not propose to restructure that Board to create an all or majority public member structure.
- The original recommendation for BHEC still creates a public majority board. Including professional members brings expertise that would likely be lost if BHEC was composed of public members with professional members relegated to "ex officio" roles.
- The behavioral health regulatory boards currently housed at HHSC work collaboratively with respect for the uniqueness of each specialization. This is evidenced by their implementation of consistent disciplinary matrices and alignment of rules where appropriate.
- Including professional members on BHEC is much more likely to enhance consistency in standards than interference on standards of practice, licensing and enforcement decisions since no profession would hold a majority on BHEC.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

Furthermore, it needs to be said that the current support from the state for the Profession of licensed counselors is inequitable. Our dues/fees bring in about 2 million dollars a fiscal year and the offices that support our license operate on a 500k budget. We have a backlog of 4-8 months before our students graduating can receive a licence to work in a field they have spent 3 years in graduate school to enter. They also are having there students loans become due well before they ever can rightfully earn a paycheck as a counselor. Given that Texas has been identified in many reports as a mental health shortage area, currently only the metro-plexes are not in shortage, this backlog in the license office is making the problem worse. An marriage and family therapist can get their license in 2 weeks and ours takes 4-8 MONTHS. It clearly signifies a problem and we know the staff processing the licenses works extremely hard to keep up with the demand, but we also know that they are totally understaffed and that needs to change. Thank you for the opportunity to record my comments about this very important issue.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree