

May 27, 2014

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Dear Mr. Luce:

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Sunset Commission's proposal regarding the closure of 6 state supported living centers by 2022. My brother, Matthew Lind, has been residing at the San Antonio State Supported Living Center (SASSLC) for 20 years. He is 55 years old, profoundly mentally retarded since birth, blind since 10 years old, and physically handicapped as a result of Leggs Perthes disease. It is our family's consensus that SASSLC is the best facility for him to reside as he has thrived there. Affirming this, Rebecca Jenkins, Matthew's sister, is his legal guardian. She has visited Matthew at least weekly since he has resided at SASSLC. She is the most qualified person in his life to make his living choice and that choice is SASSLC. This decision of hers is upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court case, *Olmstead v. L.C.* In the syllabus of the decision by Justice Ginsburg, it states "that, under Title II of the ADA, States are required to place persons with mental disabilities in community settings rather than in institutions when....**the transfer from institutional care to a less restrictive setting is not opposed by the affected individual....**" In light of this ruling, the closing of existing schools not only involuntary removes the affected individual, but also, denies the affected individual the right to remain in the institution. Your recommendation for closures is in opposition to this long-standing ruling and would have adverse legal implications for the State of Texas.

Furthermore, the current residents of our state supported living centers that remain in these facilities would potentially be removed from close proximity to their families and legal guardians. Texas is a big state and this would require advocates, families and legal representatives to travel further to have access to these residents. This makes it an irrelevant argument that other states have closed institutions.

Lastly, below is a recent picture of Matthew. He is holding Zippy the monkey, a toy that he has been attached to throughout his life. The reason for including the picture is to remind us that we are making life-decisions for precious non-voting citizens of our great State. We must be their voice. The most important point in making these weighty decisions is that we do not lose sight of their humanity. May we never see them as just a number, statistic or the bottom line on a budget.

Please reconsider your recommendation to close state supported living centers. Listen to the families, friends and guardians of these affected individuals. Put aside the 40 years of the agenda to tear down our institutions and to deny their availability. We would not stand behind them if we did not believe that they provide the best living options for our loved ones.

Sincerely,

