

**Sunset Advisory Commission
Health and Human Services Commission**

Members of the Sunset Advisory Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this commission. My name is George Linial and I am the President/CEO of LeadingAge Texas. We represent over 250 not-for-profit retirement housing communities, assisted living communities, continuing care retirement communities, and nursing homes. LeadingAge Texas member communities are primarily sponsored by community-based non-profit, civic, religious, fraternal, other groups and mission-driven organizations. Over 30,000 aging Texans reside in our member communities.

LeadingAge Texas staff and members work closely with the Health and Human Services Commission on regulatory issues, initiatives to help improve quality, and more recently the implementation of STAR+PLUS Medicaid managed care. Overall, LeadingAge Texas supports the sunset staff recommendations that seek to improve the administration of Medicaid services, the delivery of those services as the state transitions to managed care, and provider enrollment and credentialing processes. We also support the improvement of quality health care initiatives and the development of incentive-based payment programs by managed care organizations.

As healthcare providers, our members rely on HHSC to provide efficient services, and the most current and consistent information to deliver quality care to the 30,000 Texans living in our communities. As managed care continues to expand and serve larger populations, providers will be implementing new procedures further increasing administrative burdens. Sunset staff recommendations that will result in less fragmentation, better organization, and streamlined processes will benefit all providers and the people they serve.

A major issue facing nursing facility providers who care for elderly adults is the length of time residents are pending Medicaid eligibility. Often, nursing facility residents exhaust personal funds or are admitted from Medicare and applying for Medicaid. Long delays in Medicaid approval and retroactive payments to facilities due to the inefficiencies of the Medicaid program have created financial hardships for the nursing homes dedicated to serving our most vulnerable aging population.

LeadingAge Texas would like to make one additional recommendation to the Sunset Advisory Commission before closing. The Informal Dispute Resolution (IDR) process gives nursing facilities and others the opportunity to refute deficiencies and violations cited in surveys conducted by DADS. As it functions today, the IDR and survey process are too intertwined resulting in ineffective and potentially bias IDR proceedings. In some cases, IDR reviewers are former surveyors. To create an equitable system for nursing facilities wishing to contest deficiencies and violations, we recommend moving the IDR process out of the agency to an independent third party.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments and suggestions to the committee. We appreciate and support the continual oversight of these initiatives by this committee. LeadingAge Texas members stand committed to working with all parties to make certain that we provide the most adequate system for improving the delivery of long-term care services to Texas seniors.

Testimony Presented by: George Linial, LeadingAge Texas President/CEO