

Texas Nonprofit Council Comments Texas Sunset Staff Report on the Health and Human Services Commission

The Texas Nonprofit Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Sunset Commission staff's recommendations regarding the Sunset review of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). Our comments are pursuant to Recommendation #13, which concerns advisory committees.

We respectfully request that the Sunset Commission remove the Texas Nonprofit Council (TNC) and the Interagency Coordinating Group (ICG) from Recommendation 13.1, which would take the two entities out of statute. We further request that the Sunset Commission revise recommendations 25 and 26 in Appendix E, which currently would eliminate statutory reports by the TNC and the ICG. We request that the reporting requirements for the TNC and the ICG be continued.

The Staff report states: "To obtain stakeholder input related to rules and policies for its programs, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) oversees 41 advisory committees, 35 of which are in statute and briefly described in Appendix D. Advisory committees are designed for stakeholders and members of the public, either through membership on a committee or during the public input period of a meeting, to advise or provide certain perspectives or expertise to the agency on its responsibilities."

Appendix identifies the Texas Nonprofit Council and its counterpart, the Interagency Coordinating Group, as statutory advisory committees to HHSC. However, neither of these bodies actually is an advisory committee to HHSC.

The Texas Nonprofit Council (TNC) is composed of 1 representatives of statutorily designated nonprofit disciplines. The TNC was established by SB 993, 83rd Regular Session, to assist the Interagency Coordinating Group (ICG) in improving contracting relationships, communications and collaboration between state agencies and the nonprofit sector. The ICG is convened by the Texas National Service Commission (OneStar Foundation) and consists of representatives of 24 state agencies, each appointed by their respective agency head.

According to the enrolled bill summary for SB 993, TNC is not subject to Chapter 2110, Texas Government Code, governing state agency advisory committees. TNC is subject to Sunset review in 2019 and every 12th year after 2019 but cannot be abolished under the Sunset Act.

Texas has tens of thousands of 501(c)(3) nonprofits, and they are crucial to the successful implementation of many state programs. The work of the TNC, in collaboration with the ICG, allows state agencies and the nonprofit community to continue to work together to make government more efficient and more responsive, enhancing the effectiveness of both parties. The tough economic times experienced by families, nonprofits and state agencies require greater cooperation between the nonprofit sector and state services to meet the needs of vulnerable residents. By helping to boost the effectiveness of nonprofits, the TNC may be able to assist the state in redesigning programs and services in the future that could be provided more efficiently and effectively by nonprofits.

Respectfully submitted by the Texas Nonprofit Council:

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**Testimony to the Sunset Commission
Health and Human Services Commission
Bee Moorhead
Executive Director, Texas Impact
November 13, 2014**

Good morning, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Bee Moorhead and I'm the executive director of Texas Impact. I'm also here in my capacity as Chair of the Texas Nonprofit Council.

Requesting the Faith and Community-Based Initiative Be Removed from HHSC Sunset Recommendations

On behalf of both organizations, I am requesting that the Sunset Commission remove the Texas Nonprofit Council and its counterpart, the Interagency Coordinating Group, from Recommendation 13, because they aren't advisory committees—to HHSC or anyone else. Together they provide the backbone for Texas' faith and community-based initiative.

Texas Nonprofit Council and Interagency Coordinating Group

The Interagency Coordinating Group is convened by the OneStar Foundation. It consists of representatives of 24 state agencies, each appointed by their respective agency head. The Texas Nonprofit Council is composed of 12 representatives of statutorily designated nonprofit disciplines. The members are appointed by the commissioner of HHSC and HHSC provides some logistical support. The working relationship with HHSC is great, but the Nonprofit Council doesn't advise HHSC on anything.

The Nonprofit Council and the Interagency Coordinating Group work together to improve contracting relationships, communications and collaboration between state agencies and the nonprofit sector. The work of the Nonprofit Council, in collaboration with the Interagency Coordinating Group, helps state agencies and the nonprofit community work together to make government more efficient and more responsive, enhancing the effectiveness of both parties.

In fact, Dr. Janek alluded to a success of the faith and community-based initiative in his testimony yesterday. The great response to HHSC's shift from a paper application system to an online portal is thanks in part to the work of many hundreds of faith and community-based organizations that have signed on as Community Partners to help ensure Texans in all 254 counties have access to computers and the Internet so they can use the online application system.

Recommendation #13 More Generally

Advisory committees are important in public policy because they offer the public access to implementation processes like rulemaking. They are important to stakeholders because they give people a say in the nuts and bolts of the programs they depend on. They are important to legislators because advisory committee members have a chance to learn about agencies and offer insights and information in the legislative process.

As you consider consolidating agencies, collapsing administrative layers and reconfiguring programs, a major source of heartburn will be public skepticism. You can build public trust in a reformed system by giving stakeholders a statutory voice in the process.

Texas Impact suggests you specify at least one major statutory advisory committee in your legislation. We suggest you give them clear direction as to what their role is in the process and what kind of work you expect from them. And we suggest that you see them as your collaborators in ensuring a transparent and accountable system.

We'd be delighted for the opportunity to provide whatever assistance we can as you go through the legislative process. Thank you for your service and for the opportunity to testify.