

Chelsea Nguyen

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## **PUBLIC TESTIMONY**

Dear Honorable Sunset Advisory Committee Members,

Thank you for giving me this opportunity speak with you all again today since the last public hearings several months ago. My name is Chelsea Nguyen and I am a single mother of two children and a small business owner of a family salon and spa from Sugar Land , Texas.

I am also a current employer with the Department of Rehabilitative Services - Division of Blind Services and a member of the Texas Rehab Action Network which is a non-profit organization whose mission is to advance the Public Vocational Rehabilitation (PVR) System in the State of Texas .

A little over a year ago at a TRAN conference, I was inspired by a fellow business owner's presentation to take a leap of faith, open my mind and salon doors to hire consumers from the Department of Blind Services (DBS) to help me with my family business. Now, I am proud to share that from my direct expereince, I can say without a doubt, the highly specialized, skilled and knowledgeable staff from DBS has not only helped me find my ideal employee, but they have proved to me that they are the most qualified agency to rehabilitate and partner businesses with well trained and qualified individuals with disabilities who can become an asset to any business.

Their specialized Vocational Rehab Counselors and Employment Assistance Team offered me invaluable services such as helping me develop ADA compliant interview questions, doing a workplace assessment and providing the assistive technology for what my salon and visually impaired consumers needed to help them best perform their jobs. They also provided us with a job coach so that I was able to stay focused on running my business and doing what I do best.

I am here today to voice my opposition to the Sunset Report's Issue 1, which proposes to consolidate the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DARS) with other HHS agencies and propose instead to let DARS do what they do best and create a separate

division within HHSC dedicated to providing employment services for people with disabilities and for this division to administer all other HHSC employment-related programs as well. This way, the specialized needs of the disabled and blind population which tends to have a high unemployment, will not be overlooked and will continue to receive the vocational rehab services that are necessary to help them become gainfully employed.

I also believe that blending DARS services with other HHS services, such as eligibility determination, will make it more difficult for people like my current and/or future visually impaired disabled employees have access to services that help them go to work and keep working.

Secondly, I believe that the Sunsets recommendations will place Texas at risk of losing the millions of dollars in federal funding it currently receives because the proposed consolidation will be in violation of the federal regulations Texas is required to comply with in order to receive those funds.

For these reasons stated above, I hope that the Sunset Committee will take TRAN's alternative recommendations into consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Chelsea C. Nguyen