

Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Mr. Ken Levine, Director  
Sunset Advisory Commission  
1501 North Congress, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Mr. Levine:

As President of the American Council of the Blind of Texas, the largest membership organization of blind and visually impaired consumers in Texas, I would like to voice our alarm and deep concerns with respect to the recommendations in the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and System Issues Staff Report.

Our ACB of Texas officers, Board of Directors and membership strongly oppose recommendation 1.1 which would consolidate the present five HHS system agencies, including the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, into one single agency. We believe that such consolidation would create a system that will make access to rehabilitation services for people who are blind or visually impaired significantly more difficult (a situation which has proven to be the case in other states where consolidation has been tried). The proposed organizational structure that places rehabilitation services under a generic term like “medical and social services” would marginalize the critical direct services required by blind and visually impaired individuals to be successful at finding employment. Further, such a structure would not ensure program control of budget authority and policy. In addition, abolishment of the agency’s advisory Councils removes the transparency and accountability to the public, elected officials, and the consumers they serve. We firmly believe that the proposed structure would create a system too large to meet the needs of visually impaired consumers.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth Semien, Sr.