

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Janet Wood](#)
Subject: FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Wednesday, November 16, 2016 8:13:19 AM

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From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Wednesday, November 16, 2016 8:12 AM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Agency: TEXAS STATE BOARD EXAMINERS PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS

First Name: LeAnn

Last Name: Solmonson

Title: Director of Counselor Education Programs

Organization you are affiliated with: Stephen F Austin State University, Texas Counseling Association

Email:

City: Nacogdoches

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or
Opposed:

Dear Members of the Sunset Commission,

I am writing in response to the staff report recommendations for the Licensing Boards that regulate Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologist in Texas.

I have been an LPC in Texas for over 20 years and train students in an LPC program, as well as supervise LPC interns. I have been involved in leadership within my profession at the state and national level. This involvement includes attendance at a number of LPC Board meetings and working with the Board on professional issues.

The staff report consists of a scathing indictment of these boards and there are some things with which I agree. However, the report does not present all of the facts related to the issues that are highlighted. I agree with the information about the backlog of complaints and long delays in processing licensure paperwork. I agree that communicating and getting answers from the staff is difficult. The report does not appropriately address the source of those problems, which is inadequate funding and being understaffed. The backlog of complaints is partially related to the number of investigators that are assigned to the board. For many years, there were only 2 investigators assigned to work with several different boards. It has just been with the last year or so that additional investigators were allocated to handle the complaints. It is my understanding that the Board and the Executive Director had addressed the need for additional investigators and had been denied. To hold them fully accountable for the backlog of complaints is not appropriate when there were unable to obtain the resources necessary to respond in a timelier manner.

The same argument holds true for the customer service complaints. As indicated in the report, DSHS does not budget by board and there is inadequate staffing to manage the work of each board. These boards contribute over

\$1.5 million to the general revenue fund while being woefully underfunded and understaffed. By allowing the boards to retain more of the generated revenue and increasing dedicated staffing, both of the issues could be minimized.

As someone who regularly reviews transcripts, I support the 10 year limitation on degree requirement. Degree requirements change in order to remain current in the field. An individual who has not been engaged in the profession and has a degree that is over 10 years old is not adequately prepared to enter the field. I receive frequent requests from individuals who have been a school counselor for 30 years and are ready to retire and want to obtain the LPC credential. The courses that were completed for the degree are vastly different than the current training requirements. Many of these individuals have not been serving in a mental health capacity in the schools and are not prepared to do the work of an LPC.

The areas of the report with which I agree are related to actions of specific board members. In public comment, many members of the profession spoke against the proposed rules related to exemption of the board members from continuing education and the increase in the burden of supervision requirements. I have personally witnessed the behaviors of board members described in the report related to the complaints hearings. Members of the profession have also expressed concerns to the board members about HIPAA violations and exposure of confidential information in a public hearing. We have also witnessed the lack of consistency in sanctions described in the report. I support the sanctions matrix recommended by the staff.

I oppose the recommendation to transition the licensing board to an advisory status and encourage the boards continue to have autonomous regulation for the purpose of protecting the profession and the clients we serve. Those within the profession should accomplish regulation of the profession.

TDLR is not equipped to regulate the mental health profession. We work with a fragile population and the move to TDLR would not resolve access to care or regulatory challenges. Adequate funding and improving the structure within the boards will address those issues.

We ask that fee revenue be utilized to adequately fund the operation of the boards so that Issues 2 and 3 could be addressed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on issues related to my profession.

Le'Ann L. Solmonson, Ph.D., LPC-S, CSC

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: I support the transfer of the boards to the Health and Human Services Commission.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree