



19 October 2020

Texas Sunset Review Commission  
P.O. Box 13066  
Austin, TX 78711

[sunset@sunset.texas.gov](mailto:sunset@sunset.texas.gov)

Re: Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report on the Anatomical Board of the State of Texas, 2020–2021, 87th Legislature

Dear Commission,

I am writing to comment on the Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report on the Anatomical Board of the State of Texas, 2020–2021, 87th Legislature from the perspective of the American Association for Anatomy (AAA). The AAA is a tax-exempt, nonprofit scientific organization founded in 1888. The organization is governed by bylaws, a strategic plan, and other guiding documents developed and adopted by the member-elected Board of Directors. This scientific society is the largest professional anatomy association in the United States with over 2,000 members. Our mission is to advance anatomical science through research, education, and professional development. The AAA plays an important role in defining best practices in the care of human body donors and we will continue to play this role within academic institutions.

The two recommendations of the Sunset Advisory Commission Staff are to abolish the Anatomical Board of the State of Texas and to authorize colleges and universities with willied body programs to form a consortium, and direct them to consider adopting best practices to maintain effective and ethical willied body programs in Texas.

The Sunset Staff determined Texas' higher education institutions could continue to effectively operate the state's willied body programs without the board's oversight or involvement. The Sunset Staff also noted: "However, the review also acknowledges the board's statute and other state regulations have not kept up with the changing nature of the whole body donation industry, resulting in significant regulatory gaps. Currently, statute does not authorize the board to fully regulate the whole body donation industry in Texas, specifically commercial, for-profit body donation companies, including Science Care, that have come into existence since the board's last Sunset review. Currently, Texas law does not clearly consider or provide for regulation of these companies."

The AAA shares concerns raised in the Staff Report, regarding the practices within the for-profit body brokers' industry and would like to see better laws and regulations governing

these entities. Also, of concern is that further limiting regulation on body donation may not be in the best interests of the constituents of Texas and may negatively impact the training of the healthcare workforce in your state. Maintaining public confidence in meeting the needs of donors and their families and those of education and research is essential. It is our belief that abolishing the Anatomical Board of the State of Texas without first having dealt with the issue of commercial body brokers will be detrimental to education, research and medical skill training in Texas. The Anatomical Board, and the higher education institutions it supports, provides a valuable public service by enabling people to donate their bodies for education and research in a consistent manner and with a degree of oversight and transparency. Not only does the Board oversee facilities within the state that utilize donor bodies or anatomical specimens donated through one of the university-associated willed body programs, it also is also currently involved in regulating the encroachment of commercial willed body programs into the State of Texas. Thus, abolishment of the Board would lead to lack of any centralized oversight of willed body programs within Texas, allowing the commercial entities to operate without any regulation or oversight. Lack of a Board may also have the unintended consequence of the educational institutions coming into competition with one another in order to acquire the number of donor individuals necessary to meet their educational, research and skill training obligations.

Thank you for hearing our concerns.

Sincerely,



D. Rick Sumner, PhD

Professor and Chair, Department of Cell & Molecular Medicine, Rush University Medical Center  
President, American Association for Anatomy