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5/15/1998

TESTIMONY TO THE TEXAS SUNSET ADVISORY COMMISSION

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Mr. Chairman and Members,

I am Kendra Thornton. As a wife and mother of two small children, my lifelong dream of becoming a nurse seemed out of reach until I learned of an online option to begin my nursing career: Excelsior College. My husband (also an RN of more than 20 years now) was skeptical of my consideration of this option until he saw my school books, identical to the set of books he used in his traditional nursing program.

Now, more than 18 years later, I am a critical care instructor in a traditional nursing school, having obtained my Master's Degree in Nursing and a specialty certification as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner. My journey as a nurse educator started with my associate degree from Excelsior College. The program's structure required me to always be prepared, leading to a readiness to excel in the professional realm with a strong urgency for critical thought. My time management and prioritization strategies were aligned for success, having been challenged through the school's innovative, performance-based curriculum, test pacing and deeper engagement in learning. I have benefitted from Excelsior's unique educational approach, now commonly seen in other schools as they adopt similar learning strategies.

The mission of the state board of nursing is to promote and protect the welfare of the people of Texas (namely patients). My experiences with Excelsior College have been completely positive, having been challenged to think and function as a Registered Nurse through online learning while continuing to manage my home and raise my children. Texas residents should be allowed to align themselves with the program that fits their life situation. Excelsior's nursing education is part of a broad array of proven and effective educational programs available to Texans.

In conclusion, my work, my goals and my outcomes as a nursing instructor in a traditional nursing program are virtually identical to the content and expectations I see (and have seen) from Excelsior College. Preserving this program as an option for students will provide needed additional options for learning while maintaining the rigorous standards necessary for safe patient care as a Registered Nurse.

I ask you to consider this as you make your decisions. Thank you.