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Statement to the Sunset Review Commission regarding the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) and Division for Blind Services (DBS).

I have read the staff report of June 2014. My comments are directed to that report and other issues, based on my training and experience. I started working with the Texas Rehabilitation Commission in 1968 as a counselor in the Texas Medical Center. In 1972, I went into private practice as a Rehabilitation Counselor and continue with that work. My resume is attached (1).

Also attached is a study about the incidence of coronary heart disease by age and sex(2). It points out that two of you on the panel likely have coronary heart disease. I bring this to your attention because I am sure that when symptoms start, you will not want to go to a general practice physician, but a doctor who specializes in the symptoms you have.

Likewise, a study about the prevalence of Vision Impairment, please see the attached(3), shows that those of us sixty and over will need medical care for vision problems. Again, for myself and I expect for you as well, we will search for a doctor who specializes in our needs, instead of going to a general practice doctor. And if our vision problem requires the need of a professional to help us get back to work, we will seek out such a specialist counselor, who has had specific specialized training to facilitate return to work. And that counselor will be found at the Division for Blind Services.

Again to use the medical paradigm, just as there are medical specialists, there are Rehabilitation Counselor specialists. I became most aware of this when my daughter finished her Rehab Counselor Masters Degree and went to work for DBS. She related to me the intense special training she underwent, particularly "immersion". For one week, blind folded the whole week, she was taught to traverse 6th street, used hand and power tool including a bench saw to make a wooden project and baked a cake. Daughter has since moved on to work in Austin for AT&T as a specialist in Accessibility issues for their products, in large part due to the training she received through DBS. You staff mentioned having undergone "immersion", but not as to who

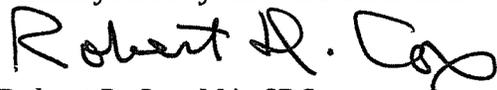
was their coach and guide, who must have given your staff member some high level of confidence of their getting through the experience unscathed. I was disappointed to not see this reflected in their report. Really, I didn't see any "atta boys" in the report.

Therefore, it is my opinion that Texans with vocational/vision problems have been well served by DBS, because DBS is able to focus on its mission and because the administrators have had the special training and are also able to focus on their mission. Please do not take away from vision impaired Texans this invaluable resource by diluting it into a big general agency.

I have served as an independent vocational expert witness for the Social Security Administration's Disability Adjudication process for the last 35 years. As mentioned in the staff report, one of the large DARS programs is Disability Determination. I see no vocational rehabilitation process in this administrative review. No counseling is done, no rehabilitative services and no placement efforts. Moving the Department of Disability Determination out of DARS into some other agency such a Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) would save administrative duplication.

The staff made reference to a statistic published by the Department of Labor, regarding the incidence of employment of the disabled. This data base, please see attached(4), is based upon a non-professional, non-medical layman based written survey. This also is attached. As can be seen, the respondent has no need for knowledge about the impairment in question, simply the behavior of the person being described. I recommend that graduate students in the six rehab counselor training programs, work as surveyors for a research project from a Texas School of Public Health to get these important statistics for the State of Texas.

Thank you for your kind attention

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert D. Cox". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Licensed Professional Counselor