

Centro de Mi Salud, LLC

Bilingual Behavioral Healthcare Services

November 6, 2014

Dear Senator Jane Nelson,

As a provider with the NorthSTAR network, Centro de Mi Salud LLC was incredibly disappointed to learn of the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission's recommendation to discontinue the NorthSTAR system. We urge you to keep this system intact, or risk losing a model of care that has improved treatment access and quality of life for countless Texans at less than half the annual per-person cost of the average state program.

Prior to NorthSTAR, our seven-county region served approximately 10,000 individuals—today, more than 73,000 of our region's individuals utilize services through NorthSTAR. This massive jump in utilization speaks so clearly to NorthSTAR's ease of access. In fact, the counties served by NorthSTAR remain the only region in Texas that has never had a waiting list for mental health or substance use disorder services.

This system is less burdensome on providers, as well. NorthSTAR divides the managing authority function from the provider function, which means my colleagues and I can devote less time to jumping through administrative hurdles and more time treating patients. And because of blended funding from federal, state and local sources, our treatment decisions are based on clinical needs rather than the funding stream.

Because of this, NorthSTAR treatment outcomes are among the highest in the state, with public quarterly reports placing NorthSTAR members in the top 15% of outcomes across Texas.

Incredibly, this system offering better access and proven treatment outcomes is far and away more cost-effective for the state: the cost of providing mental health care per person under the NorthSTAR system in 2014 is approximately \$1,587 annually, compared to an average cost of \$3684 per person annually in the rest of the state.

Better still, NorthSTAR is constantly finding new ways to improve. As providers, this dedication to finding enhanced treatment options is critical to our mission of providing quality health care for each and every patient who walks into our offices. Innovation is so fundamental to the NorthSTAR model, in fact, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and the Department of State Health Services have approached NorthSTAR to pilot multiple new initiatives. A recent example of this arose during the Ebola outbreak, where NorthSTAR worked with state and county partners to coordinate quarantine counseling and services.

Centro de Mi Salud LLC is proud to be among the more than 350 dedicated providers of NorthSTAR network, and proud to serve our community through a health care system built with both patient and provider needs in mind. We urge you, then, to reject the recommendations of the Sunset Commission staff, and to work with the North Texas Behavioral Health Authority, state leaders, and other stakeholders to preserve the many strengths of the NorthSTAR system. We are confident that building an enhanced NorthSTAR model is the right thing to do for the community, for providers, and most importantly, for the people we serve.

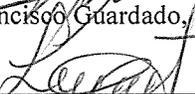
Sincerely,



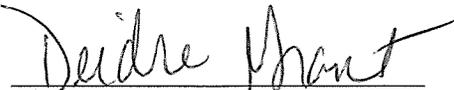
Norma Westurn, LPC-S



Francisco Guardado, QMHP



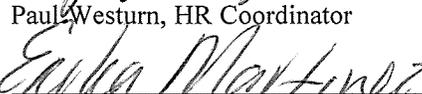
Luz Ruiz, QMHP



Deidre Grant, Administrative Supervisor



Paul Westurn, HR Coordinator



Erika Martinez, Intake Office Supervisor