

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Dawn Roberson](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)  
**Date:** Friday, May 23, 2014 4:34:54 PM

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-----Original Message-----

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]  
Sent: Friday, May 23, 2014 3:44 PM  
To: Sunset Advisory Commission  
Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Friday, May 23, 2014 - 15:44

Agency: DEPARTMENT AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES DADS

First Name: Rainbow

Last Name: Di Benedetto

Title: Ms.

Organization you are affiliated with:

City: Austin

State: Texas

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

I am extremely concerned about the recommendation to close to Austin State Supported Living Center, and that it is motivated more by a desire to reclaim what is termed 'prime real estate' than by concern for the welfare of its residents. Some of the bases for the argument to close have been created by policies up to this point:

- Number of individuals served is declining because parents and guardians of persons who could utilize these services and not being informed of the option, and/or are discouraged from using it;
- Parents and guardians of persons currently living at the living centers are being pressured to move them to community based facilities;
- Staff turnover is caused in large part by low pay and abusive policies, such as requiring people to work two consecutive eight-hour shifts without prior notice.

Comparing the number of such facilities in Texas to those in other states is somewhat disingenuous, because Texas has a more geographically dispersed population than any other state. It is burdensome for residents and families for them to be housed in a distant location.

Living in a SSLC allows residents more freedom of movement and quality of life than they would enjoy in the community. It is important for them to have community contact and outings; however, an environment where they feel safe and comfortable is also necessary. When asked, the woman for who I am guardian will state immediately and unequivocally that AuSSLC is where she wants to stay. She becomes very upset when any other possibilities are brought up.

I also do not see in the Sunset recommendation anywhere that states that parents and guardians were spoken to in the

course or their investigation.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: Parents and guardians would not be opposed to alternatives if those alternatives were of equal or better quality. That is not the case. Care should be provided by the state and not by for-profit entities. Saving money is a worthy goal, but not when it is done by negatively impacting the quality of life for these most vulnerable citizens.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Dawn Roberson](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)  
**Date:** Thursday, June 26, 2014 8:50:18 AM

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-----Original Message-----

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]

Sent: Wednesday, June 25, 2014 7:27 PM

To: Sunset Advisory Commission

Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Wednesday, June 25, 2014 - 19:26

Agency: DEPARTMENT AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES DADS

First Name: Rainbow

Last Name: Di Benedetto

Title:

Organization you are affiliated with:

City: Austin

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or

Opposed:

To whom it may concern,

I had hoped to testify in person at today's hearing, but unfortunately the scheduling is not making that possible. I am therefore providing my input here instead.

I serve as guardian for a family member who lives at the Austin State Supported Living Center. I strongly oppose its closure.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

I heard the Sunset Commission testify yesterday that their intention is not to force families to leave the living centers, but that will be precisely the result of closing this center for us. I live in Austin, and there is no way that I can see her, take her home with me for visits, and monitor her quality of care with the same frequency and regularity that I do now if she lives farther away. I heard it stated that Texas has more such living centers than any other state with the implication that we are somehow out of line. However, Texas has one of the largest and the most geographically dispersed populations of any state, so I would expect that. Geographic proximity matters to families.

The question is how this population can best be served. I am concerned that putting my family member in a group home run by a contracted for-profit entity with negatively impact quality of care. That profit has to come from somewhere. I am not reassured to hear that more funding might be provided to these facilities later, but that we should close the Austin center now.

I am concerned that my family member cannot have the same freedom of movement that she currently enjoys on the campus. She goes out into the community regularly, but she has a safe space to return to.

When I ask her about leaving the state school or even looking at other options, she becomes extremely agitated and upset. Moving her would tear her away from her home for most of her life and staff she has been with for 25 years.

I am not opposed to change. The living centers have to change and improve. I believe that many if not most of the problems stem from the fact that staff are compensated and treated poorly. I hear about policies that I personally consider abusive, such as having to work two consecutive 8-hour shifts without prior notice. It might cost a little more, but how much is turnover and overtime pay costing now? Hire and retain quality staff. Give the quality staff that are there a reason to stay. Make the system better. Don't throw it away.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree