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**Sunset Advisory Commission
Testimony by Phyllis Hanvey, The Arc of Texas
Governmental Affairs Committee Volunteer
June 25, 2014**

Good morning. My name is Phyllis Hanvey and I serve on The Arc of Texas Governmental Affairs Committee. My adult son, Geoff, has an intellectual disability and requires daily and ongoing supports to live a meaningful life in the community. I am also a registered nurse. I am testifying today on behalf of Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). The Arc of Texas envisions a world where people with disabilities are included in their communities and neighborhoods and where quality supports and services respond to their needs and personal choices.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input regarding the Sunset Advisory Committee Report regarding the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS).

The Arc of Texas supports the Sunset staff recommendations to right-size the State Supported Living Center (SSLC) system. Similar recommendations have been issued by the Texas Comptroller in 2003 and by the Legislative Budget Board in 2011.

We will not ask Texas policymakers to close all state institutions next week, next month, or even next year. However, we will ask that you reform the system responsibly. The Arc of Texas appreciates the many factors to be considered in closing state institutions, however, the most important factor must be improving the quality of services and supports being provided to individuals with I/DD both in the SSLCs and in the community. As such, we ask that you embrace responsible reform so that (1) the state institutions, both in number and size of facilities, more efficiently reflects the number of individuals being served, and (2) community capacity is strengthened to meet the needs and numbers of those who transition into the community.

Consider the following facts:

- Texas operates 13 SSLCs despite declining enrollment and increasing costs. In Texas, the SSLC system provided services to over 13,000 individuals at its peak in 1977. Today, that system serves approximately 3,400 individuals. The problem is obvious; the state institutions in Texas need to be right-sized. There are too many facilities for the number of individuals currently being served by state institutions. Right-sizing the SSLC system to more efficiently reflect the number of individuals being served will provide more resources for individuals desiring to live in their communities.

- Currently, there are over 100,000 people on waiting lists for I/DD Medicaid community based waivers, waiting as long as 11 years to receive services. The over 100,000 individuals on waiting lists demonstrate that there is a need to expand community based services.

For these reasons, we agree with the Sunset staff findings and recommendation that savings achieved through right-sizing the SSLC system be reinvested in the I/DD long term services and supports system to strengthen community capacity to meet the needs and numbers of those SSLC residents who transition into the community and also to serve individuals who are currently on waiting lists.

By reinvesting savings, statewide community provider capacity can be strengthened to provide community based services for persons who are medically fragile or require behavioral supports. Individuals with I/DD must receive individualized supports, including access to medical and behavioral supports, as they leave institutions or currently live in the community. Investing savings from right-sizing the SSLC system will allow the state to provide more consistent support for people with more complex needs. Further, in order to increase community capacity, provider rates must be established that support the provision of these services for individuals with complex medical or behavioral challenges.

Finally, The Arc of Texas supports Sunset staff recommendation to improve quality and ensure safety of individuals with I/DD in DADS day habilitation programs. People want the opportunity to participate in meaningful activities and want the choice of and support to participate in individualized, meaningful day and employment activities that reflect personal goals and desires. Day habilitation programs should have a meaningful purpose. Therefore, DADS should require meaningful self-determination/self-advocacy skills development in day habilitation programs to empower individuals to participate more actively in directing their service planning and expressing their needs and preferences. Likewise, DADS should ensure adequate care and standards and funding rates in Day Habilitation programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input today.

Respectfully,

Phyllis Hanvey
The Arc of Texas Governmental Affairs Committee