

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Dawn Roberson](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)  
**Date:** Sunday, June 08, 2014 12:44:47 PM

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

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]  
Sent: Saturday, June 07, 2014 3:30 PM  
To: Sunset Advisory Commission  
Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Saturday, June 7, 2014 - 15:29

Agency: DEPARTMENT AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES DADS

First Name: Resa

Last Name: Harrison

Title: Family Member

Organization you are affiliated with: P.A.R.T.; Voice of the Retarded; Brenham State Supported Living Center

City: Aubrey

State: Texas

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

Please support Texas State Schools (now called State Supported Living Centers) for the mentally retarded. Please oppose any legislation or activity that proposes the closure or consolidation of large congregate facilities. I don't know what our family would have done had we not been blessed with the loving care and excellent treatment my brother Timmy has received in the 36 years he has lived at the Brenham State Supported Living Center.

Timmy has profound mental retardation, a result of Fragile X syndrome. He needs constant supervision, as he functions cognitively at a developmental level of a two year old child.

My brother is fascinated with electrical appliances, pools, cars, trains, and other potential dangers which he is safely protected from at his home at the Brenham State School. He enjoys walking around his home, and being outside in nature. But he has to be supervised, which is why the Brenham State School meets his needs for least restrictive environment perfectly.

On behalf of my brother, and other severely and profoundly mentally retarded individuals who can't speak for themselves, I respectfully request that State Schools remain a viable option along a continuum of services, that they are kept under the management of the state, and that they are funded appropriately.

I have been a professional in the field of special education for 40 years, (Educational Diagnostician) and have a unique perspective from both the family and professional point of view. I have seen a variety of group homes, ICFMR private facilities, State Schools, and public school programs for children with severe and profound mental

retardation. I can tell you, unequivocally, that State Supported Living Centers, or formally known as State Schools provide better residential care, despite some of the problems that have recently surfaced-- mostly due to a lack of proper funding.

Rather than accepting the criticism that State Supported Living Centers are isolated and restrictive, I see them similar to gated communities or segregated retirement homes where people of similar interests and needs live happily in communities that can focus on the needs of those populations.

Brenham State Supported Living Center is a lovely campus, and the residents work, learn, and play in nearby communities everyday. They are by no means isolated.

There is no question that quality of services need improvement in State Schools, but with increased funding, greater supervision will reduce accidents and other concerns.

In terms of private providers, I am concerned about their ability to care for severely and profoundly mentally retarded residents in a community setting due to the severe needs of these individuals.

There are people who believe that these facilities like the Texas State Supported Living Centers (SSLC's) are not appropriate places to live. I strongly disagree. Many of our citizens cannot survive and would not be happy in a "less restrictive" environment.

Thank you.

Resa Harrison

Sister and Legal Guardian of Timothy Thompson, Resident of the Brenham State School or Brenham State Supported Living Center. (Our parents are deceased)

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: Provide the necessary funding for our most vulnerable Texas citizens.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree

Dear Members of the Sunset Commission:

I am asking for your support for Texas State Schools (now called State Supported Living Centers) for the mentally retarded. I don't know what our family would have done had we not been blessed with the loving care and excellent treatment my brother Timmy has received in the 36 years he has lived at the Brenham State Supported Living Center.

Timmy has profound mental retardation, a result of Fragile X syndrome. He needs constant supervision, as he functions cognitively at a developmental level of a two year old child.

My brother is fascinated with electrical appliances, pools, cars, trains, and other potential dangers which he is safely protected from at his home at the Brenham State School. He enjoys walking around his home, and being outside in nature. But he has to be supervised, which is why the Brenham State School meets his needs for least restrictive environment perfectly.

On behalf of my brother, and other severely and profoundly mentally retarded individuals who can't speak for themselves, I respectfully request that State Schools remain a viable option along a continuum of services, that they are kept under the management of the state, and that they are funded appropriately.

I have been a professional in the field of special education for 40 years, (Educational Diagnostician) and have a unique perspective from both the family and professional point of view. I have seen a variety of group homes, ICFMR private facilities, State Schools, and public school programs for children with severe and profound mental retardation. I can tell you, unequivocally, that State Supported Living Centers, or formally known as State Schools provide better residential care, despite some of the problems that have recently surfaced-- mostly due to a lack of proper funding.

Rather than accepting the criticism that State Supported Living Centers are isolated and restrictive, I see them similar to gated communities or segregated retirement homes where people of similar interests and needs live happily in communities that can focus on the needs of those populations. Brenham State Supported Living Center is a lovely campus, and the residents work, learn, and play in nearby communities everyday. They are by no means isolated.

The U.S. Supreme court decision of Olmstead actually reaffirms the rights of those wanting care in multifaceted settings to continue to have choice, including State Schools. The findings of a national cost effective study from Voice of the Retarded concluded that large savings are not possible in settings that shift from State Schools to community placements.

There is no question that quality of services need improvement in State Schools, but with increased funding, greater supervision will reduce accidents and other concerns.

In terms of private providers, I am concerned about their ability to care for severely and profoundly mentally retarded residents in a community setting due to the severe needs of these individuals.

I witnessed this directly in my own community. A privately funded ICFMR facility was unable to provide sufficient care for their residents to the extent that they eventually were closed down. One child was killed when he ran out the front door into busy traffic. Because of zoning restrictions many neighborhoods will not accept group homes or community homes, so they often are located in business or nonresidential environments which have more traffic resulting in even less freedom for the people who live there. This ICFMR facility was designated "less restrictive" than a State School, which is a bureaucratic misnomer. In reality, it was more restrictive due to its location on a busy highway. State Schools provide more protection and greater freedom for their residents with their sprawling acreage and environmental

protections. This ICFMR facility was not subject to the same oversight or regulations that keep State Schools safe, wholesome, and the most appropriate setting for mentally retarded individuals who don't have the understanding of dangers like busy streets or stranger danger.

Please oppose any legislation or activity that proposes the closure or consolidation of large congregate facilities. There are people who believe that these facilities like the Texas State Supported Living Centers (SSLC's) are not appropriate places to live. I strongly disagree. Many of our citizens cannot survive and would not be happy in a "less restrictive" environment.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
  
Resa Harrison 6/7/14

Aubrey TX

Sister and Legal Guardian of Timothy Thompson, Resident of the Brenham State School or Brenham State Supported Living Center. (Our parents are deceased)