

Sunset Advisory Commission – Public Testimony – June 25, 2014

Agency: Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS)

My name is Nancy Beth McKinney, and I am the mother and legal guardian of Lance Davenport. Lance is a person with severe disabilities and is a resident of Brenham State Supported Living Center (SSLC).

Our family is aware of other community living options available and has attended provider fairs. Lance has even visited a group home. However, the community home representatives in our area are unable to confirm that all appropriate medical accommodations and individual care plans are available at both the home itself and the mandatory activity center where all of the residents must be transported to spend the entire day, five days a week.

As stated on Pages 1-5 of the *Sunset Staff Report with Hearing Material, June 2014*, there is no monitoring system, or accountability, in place for all providers at this time. My son cannot pick up a phone and call 911 if he or any other resident is abandoned, abused or in need of medical assistance. And, he is not alone.

On Page 22 of the *Sunset Staff Report with Hearing Material, June 2014*, a table is shown outlining the cost of care in several different types of facilities. If there is no monitoring or accountability for each type of facility listed, why should we have a high level of confidence these numbers are correct and have an exact cost comparison of services? For example, the four- to six-bed group homes in our area shift the burden of resident care five days a week to an activity center, another facility. How is this cost difference reflected in the numbers shown on Page 22?

According to Page 17 of the *Sunset Staff Report with Hearing Material, June 2014*, the closure of larger state-operated institutions, such as our SSLCs, is 'trending now' in nine other states. This report provides no additional statistics regarding the availability of like programming and medical care, the status of the health and well-being of its residents transitioned to other facilities or the change in morbidity rates for this population, if any, in these states. What is the cost to terminate the hundreds of employees at SSLCs shown on the table of Page 16 of the report? What is the larger impact of these losses as they ripple across communities within our state?

One size does not fit all, and a choice of living options will hopefully remain available for all Texans with disabilities. My son's choice is to live, work, and play at an SSLC, his least restrictive living environment. And, I could not be more grateful. The availability of his choice of living option also allows both me and Lance's older brother to care for ourselves and continue to perform work activity that contributes to the state and national economies. The state supported living center option affords a 'hand up' not just a 'hand out' for our whole family. And, we are not alone.

The SSLC facility has the ability for a wide range of services to be performed and monitored, in one place – for all of its residents. The community of Brenham welcomes and embraces persons with disabilities, provides employment opportunities for residents, volunteers and organizations support programs and activities - both on and off campus. This form of acceptance by the people and the community is vital for a facility and its residents to thrive and does not happen in every community, every neighborhood – much less every family - and this connection cannot be legislated.

Perhaps our existing SSLCs could provide some services for individuals placed into group housing, provide respite and day care programs for nearby families.

The recommended closure of six of our State Supported Living Centers from 2017 through 2023 is a very aggressive goal. The creation and availability of additional living options in communities, with competent staffing receiving an attractive wage and benefit package, with a monitoring and accountability system in place, to accommodate this vulnerable population, may not prove to be a truly realistic goal with a remarkable cost savings for the State of Texas.

On behalf of my son and our family, we urge you to revisit the recommended closure of our State Supported Living Centers. Thank you for your consideration.

"No more moves - my choice!"



Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Beth McKinney

JUN 02 2014

May 26, 2014

Ms. Amy Trost
Sunset Commission
P O Box 13066
Austin, TX 78711

Re Sunset Advisory Report, May 2014, State Supported Living Centers (SSLCs)

Dear Ms. Trost:

I am the parent and legal guardian of Lance Davenport. Lance is 35 year-old severely disabled man who has spastic cerebral palsy, a seizure disorder, legal blindness and mental retardation. He requires assistance for all of his personal needs and has been unable to be left alone his entire life.

I read, and heard, with great interest the recommendation to close a total of six SSLCs by August 31, 2022 and sense that it's largely based on the money. The numbers shown in the Advisory Report, outlining the costs between the various choices of care, are not an exact comparison in my opinion. The Provider Fairs we have recently attended with representatives of group homes available in the community do not provide all of the services under one facility; therefore, the services are spread from differing buckets of money, to different entities. The group home provides meals, a room, and residents are transported to a daycare facility every day. There is no plan to provide service for a resident who cannot go offsite to this other facility on a daily basis. There is no choice. There are no medical personnel on site at the group home. More often, the direct care staff members are not offered a fair wage and benefit package; there is high turnover. There is no monitoring in place for these facilities who care for some of our most vulnerable population. Since Lance is severely disabled, requires consistent medication management for seizures, must be repositioned, checked and changed often, we are told that any service needed for him would be requested. Most home representatives do not encourage Lance because he is "high maintenance" and would not generate revenue for their facility.

Lance does not want to move. Lance and our family made the choice for him to transition to Brenham SSLC, and we could not be more proud or more grateful. There are paid advocacy groups who strongly believe, and preach to others, that if an SSLC is closed, these dollars will automatically provide openings for waiver programs. It is my understanding that thought process is not correct.

I sincerely urge you to rethink your recommendation for total closure of six SSLCs, and I hope and pray that above all my fear for my son's life and death is heard. And, I feel a responsibility to voice my opinion for the friends of my son whose parents are no longer living who also wanted their loved ones to remain at Brenham SSLC.

With sincere respect,


Nancy Beth McKinney,
Legal Guardian and Registered Voter

xc: Scott Schalchlin, Assistant Commissioner for SSLCs