

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Dawn Roberson](#)
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Tuesday, July 01, 2014 7:42:11 AM

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

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Monday, June 30, 2014 5:05 PM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Monday, June 30, 2014 - 17:04

Agency: DEPARTMENT AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES DADS

First Name: Downing

Last Name: Bolls

Title: Taylor County Judge

Organization you are affiliated with: Taylor County

Email: bollsd@taylorcountytexas.org

City: Abilene

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or
Opposed:
June 30, 2014

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to you in response to the recommendation to close problematic and costly state supported living centers. I am asking for your support in keeping the Abilene State-Supported Living Center open. You will notice I didn't call it a "state school" because it ceased being that a long, long time ago. In fact, I'm not sure that moniker every truly fit because it has always been part of our community and provides a valuable service to those of us who live there and those of us touched by those who live there.
And, just for the record, every compassionate human being – is touched by those who live there.

As Taylor County Judge, I preside over guardianships. I worry a great deal about state supported living centers becoming "dumping grounds" for our mentally and behaviorally-challenged citizens. I can tell you that when I review the Annual Reports submitted by guardians, one of the first things I check is how often they are being visited and what kinds of things the wards are doing with their lives. At the Abilene State Supported Living Center I see example after example of people leading meaningful lives. There is a great disparity in the issues they have to deal with, but they are lovingly nurtured and assisted by people who genuinely care about them and offer the dignity and respect all of us need and want. I have seen first-hand the hope and support offered there. It's not a "dumping ground", but rather a garden, if you will, where people grow into the potential they truly have.

I have been in county government long enough to know the financial realities of dwindling resources and demands on government. I'm familiar with the practice of streamlining programs and reducing costs to free up much-needed

revenue. But I also believe that responsible government means accurately weighing the costs and benefits and fighting hardest for the causes that do matter and make a difference in the lives of those they serve. That is the process you are currently involved in and I have great respect and empathy for the work that lies ahead of you. The goals of the commission and the process are sound. But, I hope you would agree that it doesn't make sense to cut or reduce programs that work; and, the Abilene State Supported Living Center works!

What happens there makes sense. The client's success in life is commensurate with their abilities. As they are able, they live more independently. More traditional "home" settings replace large bay dormitories. They interact with the community throughout the year. I know because I have attended many of the functions there that make that happen.

These things happen because of this community's long held belief that everyone has a place at the table of life; everyone – especially those who have to work the hardest to do so.

I certainly understand and appreciate the challenges that lie before us and the difficult decision that will need to be made. I hope that you will give favorable consideration to the Abilene State Supported Living Center and the role it currently plays and could potentially play in the future delivery of services to this very fragile, but no less vital, segment of our population.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my remarks in writing.

Respectfully yours,
DOWNING A. BOLLS, JR.
Taylor County Judge

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: None

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree