

Thank you Senator Nelson and Commission members for an opportunity to speak. My name is Debra King, I am the Consumer Protection Coordinator for the Texas Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, I have been a Licensed Dietitian since 1984.

I represent nearly 5000 Licensed Dietitians and I want to clearly state that we oppose the Sunset Staff report recommendation to eliminate the licensure and regulation of Dietitians. I acknowledge the operational problems shared in the report but the answer to that problem is not to abruptly abolish the licensure of Dietitians.

Until a month ago we were expecting a Sunset review in 2016-2017. We were anticipating the steps that would be involved -- including the agency self-evaluation and up front stake holder input that typically accompany the sunset process. Today we find ourselves in what amounts to a sunset review without the full benefits of the normal sunset process.

While I appreciate the time and expertise of the Sunset Staff, I do not believe that the report reflects the thorough understanding of the regulatory and statutory framework for dietitian licensure. First and foremost I want to refute the stance that the regulatory program for dietitian licensure has little or no impact on protecting the public interest.

A comment in the Staff report states "*Occupational regulation will always receive less attention than inspections of the state's food supply. . .*" Did you know that Licensed Dietitians are included in many state regulations that require monitoring the food supply for the most at-risk Texans? These rules require Licensed Dietitians to be hired to work in the facilities that provide elder-care, child care, and end-stage renal disease, to name just a few.

The Staff Report in Appendix E describes Dietitians as follow:

*Licenses use principles of nutrition to ensure proper nourishment, care, and education of individuals or groups.* That is not all we do -- we provide Medical Nutrition Therapy, a much more complex array of services which require specialized training to treat clients with underlying chronic diseases. As just one example, Medical Nutrition Therapy involves calculating nutrition needs for tube feedings, intravenous solutions, and specialized oral feedings. In these cases a "cookie cutter diet" approach simply does not work--in fact many times the "one diet fits all" does significant harm.

I know that the legislative members of the Commission are very aware of the good work of Licensed Dietitians in their districts and I ask that you not rush to judgment without a more thorough vetting of the risk of possible injury when the skills of Licensed Dietitians become unregulated.

I also refute the Report's conclusion that the role of state dietitian regulation is nothing more than verifying that national accreditation standards have been met before licensure can occur. This generalization ignores the fact that there are actually two ways for dietitians to become licensed in Texas, including an alternative Provisional Licensing track which also requires board oversight. It also fails to take into account other oversight responsibilities of the board, including maintaining and monitoring continuing education requirements, that are more demanding than national standards.

In closing, I want to reiterate that the Licensure of Dietitians in Texas does protect the public interest in a meaningful way and request that Commission guide us to a suitable regulatory home, if indeed, the Department of State Health Services is unable to accommodate us. Thank you.