

Sunset Advisory Commission

June 13, 2014

PO Box 13066, Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Members of the Sunset Committee,

My name is Rebecca Pena and I am 30 years old. I have been a licensed and registered respiratory therapist for six years. It is two o'clock in the morning and I have not been able to sleep thinking about these changes you are considering in regards to my license to practice respiratory therapy (along with my 14,000 other colleagues).

While I am a young professional, I have gained a vast amount of experience working firstly as a pediatric respiratory therapist for 2 years and now with adults of 4 years. In my years of experience, I have found one common thread- RT's are a very important part of the healthcare team. Have you ever been in a "code", performed CPR or ventilated a patient with a bag mask or assisted a physician with endotracheal intubations? Have you witnessed this being performed? You probably do not have a clue what this means because you do not have the proper education (watching Grey's anatomy or old ER episodes do not count). While many people "think" that respiratory therapists or RCP's are replaceable, let me ask you this: Would you want your family members, or better yet yourselves, to have your respiratory therapy needs taken care of by an individual with the proper education, state issued license, and experience or the person that just one day decided they would give this career a shot because it looked cool, got on the job training with no professional licensing or credentials? Would you trust this person to manage your loved ones life support machine? Most certainly not because I know I wouldn't. As you probably read from other letters from colleagues, the NBRC or AARC, state licensing is very important.

The bottom line that I want to convey and to put bluntly is this: why in the world would you want to make this change? What do you have to gain from it? I can tell you this- if these changes are made, you are putting many lives at risk. The patient always comes first and their lives would be in great harm. The nurses caring for these patients would be putting their licenses in jeopardy because they would have added responsibilities with no training in specific respiratory therapy. I have many examples of times where if I, working as an RT, was not present, patients would be lost due to medical error. The next big question I have is what about my job? I have a bachelor's degree in respiratory therapy that I worked very hard for. I have \$25k in college loans I am still paying on from tuition, figure in the cost of the state board exams, uniforms, etc. for what? To be told that in less than 10 years my degree would be worthless? Will you be paying me back for all that?

I am definitely not into politics and honestly like to avoid the conversation because my points of view differ from others. I felt the need to write to you today to express how important it is that these changes are not made. With that being said, how about I do my job and you do yours? Stay out of healthcare when you really have no clue how these changes will affect everyone.

Thank you,

Rebecca O Pena, RRT

Rebecca Pena