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May 30, 2015

Senator Jane Nelson  
Chair  
The Texas Sunset Advisory Commission  
P.O. Box 13066, Austin, Texas 78711

To the Honorable Jane Nelson:

The COPD Foundation is a non-profit organization whose mission is to develop and support programs which improve the quality of life through research, education, early diagnosis, and enhanced therapy for persons whose lives are impacted by chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

COPD is an umbrella term used to describe progressive lung disease, such as emphysema, chronic bronchitis, refractory (non-reversible) asthma, and some forms of bronchiectasis. This disease is characterized by increasing breathlessness and symptoms include; chronic coughing and wheezing. COPD patients rely on respiratory therapists to diagnosis COPD, conduct pulmonary rehabilitation, and educate patients about their inhalers and other medications. Respiratory therapists receive specialized education and training that make them a crucial part of a COPD patient's health care provider team and an essential member to the COPD community at large.

The COPD Foundation categorically opposes the Texas Department of State Health Services Sunset Advisory Commission's recommendations to discontinue state licensure for Texas respiratory therapists.

Respiratory therapists are a vital member of the health care team that treat and educate COPD patients. COPD is a chronic, progressive disease and without proper disease management COPD can become result in frequent and costly exacerbations which often contribute to hospital readmission rates. Unlike physicians or other clinicians, respiratory therapists are uniquely skilled and licensed to educate COPD patients about their treatment regimens, ensuring proper medication use and adherence; therefore, improving patient quality of life in addition to reducing hospitalizations.

It is the COPD Foundation's opinion that in order for Texas to maintain a safe and trustworthy healthcare system, Texas needs to rely on licensed, professional respiratory therapists to help patients access the quality care they need to live healthy and productive lives. Therefore, the COPD Foundation urges you to maintain mandatory respiratory care practitioner state licensure and transfer mandatory state respiratory care practitioner licensure to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation.

Sincerely,

John W. Walsh  
President and CEO, COPD Foundation