



April 10, 2018

Mr. Ken Levine, Director
Sunset Advisory Commission
1501 North Congress Avenue, 6th Floor
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Mr. Levine:

We at the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) appreciate the hard work Sunset Commission staff put into developing recommendations regarding the Board of Examiners of Marriage and Family Therapists, the Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors, and the Board of Social Worker Examiners, and we appreciate the opportunity to respond.

As Sunset staff is aware, administrative responsibility for the behavioral health boards transferred from the Department of State Health Services to HHSC on September 1, 2017. In that relatively short timeframe, HHSC is making significant strides in reducing the backlog in processing license applications that the Sunset report understandably points to as cause for concern.

HHSC is achieving these reductions through a variety of means, including hiring three additional full-time staff to process licenses, hiring temporary staff to provide support functions such as filing and answering phones, and working closely with the boards to revise rules and streamline processes. We have identified a need for nine additional full-time positions to address the growing need for both licensing and complaint investigations in this area, and we are working to fill these positions and any vacancies as they occur.

Reducing these backlogs and improving customer service has been a top priority for our Regulatory Services division. Our goal is to eliminate all licensing backlogs and then maintain acceptable timeframes for application reviews.

We also would like to note that if the three behavioral health boards identified in the Sunset report are transferred to a new agency, only the Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor (LCDC) program and the Council on Sex Offender Treatment (CSOT) program will remain at HHSC. The other licensure programs now at HHSC relate directly to programs within the HHSC Regulatory Services division. Given this, we suggest the Sunset Commission and staff consider whether the LCDC and CSOT programs should remain at HHSC or be placed in the new agency.

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Finally, to help with retention and stability, we also request that program staff transfer with the programs they now support. As subject matter experts, they will help ease the transition of these programs to a new agency.

Thank you for your consideration of our feedback on these matters. We look forward to continuing to work with you and Sunset staff on how best to support these behavioral health boards and their critical mission of protecting the health and safety of Texans.

If you have additional questions or need additional information, Amanda Martin, Director of Government and Stakeholder Relations, serves as the lead staff on this matter and she can be reached by email at Amanda.Martin04@hhsc.state.tx.us or by telephone at (512) 487-3300.

Sincerely,



Charles Smith