

NOV 07 2014



STATE OF TEXAS  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
DISTRICT 103

RAFAEL ANCHIA  
MEMBER

November 3, 2014

Mr. Ken Levine  
Director, Sunset Advisory Commission  
P.O. Box 13066  
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Ken:

I was sorry to see Issue 9 in the recent Sunset Staff Report on the Health & Human Services Commission in which the Staff recommends the discontinuation of the NorthSTAR mental health system.

NorthSTAR as a mental health delivery program has always been innovative. It separates the authority and provider roles, eliminating the built-in conflict of interest that occurs when the authority is also the main provider of services in an area. This allows for a robust network of competing providers (as you mentioned in your report on page 121), increasing efficiency and innovation, as well as giving users choice, and allows users of services to have an unbiased authority to handle grievances and complaints about providers.

NorthSTAR has always had open door access that allows eligible persons seeking services to receive the needed services in the most appropriate setting, regardless of where in the system they present for services. NorthSTAR members can choose providers and change providers from the NorthSTAR network at will, and this is important when accessing mental health services.

As you undoubtedly know, because you mentioned it in your Staff Report on DSHS, NorthSTAR is the only mental health program in the state that integrates Mental Health and Substance Abuse services and funding. And as no other mental health region in the State can say, NorthSTAR has had no waiting lists for services from its beginning in 1999.

Yes, like any health care system, there is always room for improvement. But instead of stripping away fundamental aspects of NorthSTAR, I strongly urge you to keep all that is good with the program and let local leaders, stakeholders and NorthSTAR join together to build an enhanced model that preserves what works and develop improvements where needed.

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As a State Representative, I have often heard constituents complain about the lack of State funding to the NorthSTAR mental health system, but I have never heard constituents complain about access and care provided through NorthSTAR.

I hope that the Staff will please consider my comments carefully, and reverse your recommendation on Issue 9.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rafael Anchia". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Rafael Anchia

Cc: Sunset Commission members  
(Senator Jane Nelson  
Senator Juan Hinojosa  
Senator Charles Schwertner  
Senator Brian Birdwell  
Dawn Buckingham  
Representative Four Price  
Representative Cindy Burkett  
Representative Harold V. Dutton, Jr.  
Representative Larry Gonzales  
Representative Richard Peña Raymond  
Tom Luce)