



COLLIN COUNTY

Cheryl Williams
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Senator **Jane Nelson**, Chair
Representative **Four Price**, Vice Chair
Sunset Advisory Commission
P.O. Box 13066
Austin, Texas 78711

November 23, 2014

Dear Senator Nelson and Representative Price:

On Friday, I saw a copy of input provided to the Sunset Advisory Commission that reportedly reflected the position of the North Texas Behavioral Health Authority (NTBHA) on Sunset staff recommendations regarding HHSC and System Issue 9 (NorthSTAR). I am concerned about the validity of this input since it was not approved, or even shared, with the full NTBHA Board. Below are a couple of issues that seem significant.

There is no mention in the report that the second largest county, Collin County, has indicated in NTBHA Board meetings and in public testimony to the Sunset Commission that it supports the staff recommendations. The Collin County Commissioners Court has unanimously passed a resolution indicating their desire to move out of NorthSTAR and into a more integrated model of care that better serves our residents.

While the report does mention that three providers (Metrocare Services, LifePath Systems and Lakes Regional MHMRA) dissented from the proposed NTBHA recommendation, there is an attempt to trivialize that dissent. One must consider the size of those three providers to understand the impact of their dissent. According to the most recent comparison of outpatient providers in the network (NTBHA website Data Book), these are the largest providers in all of the counties. In fact, Metrocare serves 10 times more clients than any other single provider in the NorthSTAR system. Similarly, both LifePath and Lakes are by far the biggest providers in the areas they serve. These providers have the in depth knowledge and experience to speak with authority on the need for significant change to the NorthSTAR model. Certainly the perceptions and input of these providers who together see the majority of all NorthSTAR clients should receive considerable weight in any recommendation from the NTBHA Board.

Since you have already received my testimony in person and in writing, I will not reiterate it here. However, I will again encourage you to take bold action as it relates to Issue 9: NorthSTAR. The three largest providers of the system and the second largest county have clearly spoken in favor of substantive change from the existing NorthSTAR model. I urge you to listen to the comments of those in the trenches trying to provide needed services under difficult conditions. We believe patient care and outcomes can be improved if we are allowed to transition to a model that allows for integrated care, access to the 1115 Waiver, and true local control.

As you make your decisions on how to move forward, I hope you will consider that using the existing Regional Health Partnership lines to set up Local Authorities would be a more logical way to set up a new system. Collin County is in RHP 18 and I believe DHHS would confirm that we have a strong partnership, excellent administration, and have used the 1115 Waiver very effectively. We believe we have very different needs as well as different strengths in Collin County and RHP 18 and we are confident we can create a successful system if the Sunset Committee will allow us the opportunity.

In all of these issues, it is hard to understand how we (NTBHA Board) are reflecting the public interest, as I believe we are responsible to do. Thank you for making the commission's process open and allowing input in a variety of venues. Please feel free to contact me if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cheryl Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cheryl Williams

Collin County Commissioner, Precinct 2
NTBHA Board Member