



TEXAS COUNCIL ON AUTISM
& PERVASIVE DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

January 13, 2012

Mr. Thomas Suehs, Executive Commissioner
Texas Health and Human Services Commission
P.O. Box 13247
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Executive Commissioner Suehs:

First, thank you for your support of the Texas Council on Autism. The active participation and financial support of the five Texas health and human services agencies are invaluable to the work of the Council. We look forward to working with you and Enterprise staff as we embark on a new year and prepare for the 83rd Texas Legislature.

The Texas Council on Autism has updated its *2010-2014 Texas State Plan for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders* to better communicate its legislative priorities and coordinate with the Texas health and human services system agencies as they develop their Legislative Appropriations Requests.

As you consider the state's health and human services needs for fiscal years 2014-15, I want to highlight the following priorities from the Council's State Plan.

1. **Early Childhood Intervention:** restore funding and services to FY 2010-11 levels.
2. **DARS Autism Program:** expand service availability to the six State health and human services regions. This supports the Council's Act Early priorities by providing needed early intervention services across the state and is one area where early investment by the State pays off in long term savings over the lifespan of services and supports.
3. **Texas Autism Research and Resource Center:** This has been a long-term priority for the Council and has shown significant success as an unfunded mandate under House Bill 1574, 81st Legislature, Regular Session, 2009. It's time to put some more funds behind this successful initiative beyond the internal support of HHSC and DADS.
4. **Pilot Project to Provide Services to Adults with Autism and Related Disabilities:** fund at least one of the pilot projects described in the study also mandated by House Bill 1574.
5. **Medicaid Waiver Programs:** provide funding to reduce interest lists and flexibility to use waiver funds in the best ways to serve consumers. It's time to begin to reduce the wait for families who have struggled for years on their own resources.

Executive Commissioner Thomas Suehs
January 13, 2012
Page 2

6. The Council urges HHSC and DADS to begin to implement the recommendations from the LBB January 2011 Study: *Transform State Residential Services for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*. This study recommended a plan to close down certain State Supported Living Centers in order to free up limited funds to provide community based services. We believe this will be an important source of funds in the next biennium.

These priorities reflect the views of the Council as well as many Texans with autism and their family members who have communicated with us.

Thank you again for your ongoing support of the Texas Council on Autism. Please let me know if you have any questions, or if I can assist you in any way.

Sincerely,

[Signature on file]

Frank McCamant
Chair

cc: David Lakey, M.D., Texas Department of State Health Services
Debra Wanser, Texas Department of Rehabilitative Services
Howard Baldwin, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
Chris Traylor, Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services