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TESTIMONY 2013
S.B. 126

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to present testimony in favor of S.B. 126. Establishing a mental health and substance abuse reporting system will increase accountability and transparency, and provide the public with information about which behavioral health programs are the most effective. Matching individuals with appropriate treatment can reduce the likelihood that they will enter the criminal justice system.

ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN THE TEXAS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM

Many Texans struggle with mental illness and chemical dependency. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is responsible for contracting with a range of service providers to meet the needs of these individuals. S.B. 126 requires DSHS to create a reporting system where members of the public can access information about the performance of community mental health and substance abuse providers.

Gathering and publishing accurate data about available programming serves two central purposes: 1) it increases contract accountability and transparency, and 2) it allows members of the public to make informed decisions about which programs are the most successful and the most likely to address their specific needs. This can help decision-makers determine where resources should flow, thus improving investments in effective programming. Furthermore, ensuring appropriate treatment matches will reduce costly emergency room visits and potentially decrease the number of mentally ill and chemically dependent individuals who, without access to effective treatment, may otherwise enter the criminal justice system.

KEY FINDINGS

- The Texas Department of State Health Services contracts with community centers, managed care pilot programs, and individual practitioners to provide mental health and substance abuse services.
- Individuals with mental illnesses and/or chemical dependency need access to quality behavioral health treatment that is tailored to their specific needs.
- Individuals who access appropriate mental health and addiction services are less likely to enter the criminal justice system.¹
- Incarceration (\$18,265/year) is almost seven and a half times more expensive than community supervision with treatment (\$2,438/year).²

COST-SAVING AND PUBLIC SAFETY-DRIVEN SOLUTION: SUPPORT S.B. 126 BY SENATOR NELSON

- **S.B. 126 will provide information about which behavioral health programs in Texas are the most successful**, specifically through the use of performance and outcome measures that will help to increase the accountability and transparency of such programs.
- **S.B. 126 will help Texans select substance abuse and mental health programs that are appropriate for their needs, while also helping state and local decision-makers determine which programs warrant ongoing or increased investments.** With continued support of effective programs, more individuals will have the opportunity to address the root causes of criminal behavior.

Citations on reverse.

Citations

¹ National Alliance on Mental Illness, *Dual Diagnosis and Integrated Treatment of Mental Illness and Substance Abuse Disorder*, accessed May 4, 2012.

² Legislative Budget Board, *Criminal Justice Uniform Cost Report, Fiscal Years 2010 – 2012*, January 2013, pp. 8, 14, 15; using FY 2012 prison inmate costs-per-day of \$50.04; state costs-per-day for community supervision of \$1.38; and state costs-per-day for substance abuse outpatient treatment of \$5.30.