November 19, 2026

Eric Beverly, Executive Director
Sunset Advisory Commission
PO Box 13066
Austin, TX 78711

Submitted via email to sunset@sunset.texas.gov

Re: Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report on the Department of State Health Services

Dear Mr. Beverly:

The Sunset Advisory Commission's November 2026 staff report identifies critical gaps in maternal and infant outcome data and coordination amongst state agencies necessary for sound policy decision making.

We support all Sunset staff recommendations under Issue 1 to improve state coordination among perinatal health programs to improve health outcomes for Texas mothers and babies.

Under this recommendation, we encourage the Sunset Commission to recommend strengthening capacity and data sharing capabilities of the Texas Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Review Committee (TMMMRC).

Texans Care for Children is glad to see that the Sunset staff report recognizes the importance of continuing the TMMMRC. TMMMRC provides potentially life-saving policy recommendations to the Texas Legislature. However, we know that there are limitations related to resources and available data. These limitations add to the TMMMC's challenges in providing more precise and actionable recommendations.

Texans Care for Children is a statewide, non-profit, non-partisan, multi-issue children's policy organization. We drive policy change to improve the lives of Texas children today for a stronger Texas tomorrow. We envision a Texas in which all children grow up to be healthy, safe, successful, and on a path to fulfill their promise.

Proposed Changes: Increase resources and improve data sharing to TMMMRC. These improvements will help TMMMRC align with the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine and The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention standards. HHSC should allow TMMMRC to: obtain informant interviews; access data from state agencies including DFPS and HHSC; and obtain local input from persons with lived experience and first responders.

Under Issue 1 we propose expanding efforts to address all maternal mental health conditions by Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies (TCHMB), not just postpartum depression.

We support the Sunset staff recommendation to designate the Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies, under the direction of DSHS, as the entity responsible for collecting data on postpartum depression and for using these data to develop postpartum depression programs. However, moms and babies will benefit from an expansion from postpartum depression alone to the range of maternal mental health conditions occurring prior to, during, and after pregnancy. Maternal mental health and substance use disorders are leading causes of maternal death in Texas. We know that proper and timely identification and linkages to the right care make a difference in the overall health of moms and babies.

Proposed Change: Expand the above recommendation from the Sunset staff so it includes all maternal mental health and substance use disorder data and programming to address periods just before, during, and up to twelve months after pregnancy.

We appreciate your consideration. For additional information, please contact me at lramirez@txchildren.org.

Sincerely,

Lisa Ramirez
Director of Maternal Mental Health Policy and Family Support