

Good afternoon. My name is Jeremy King. I am a Roman Catholic priest and a member of the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Meinrad in Indiana. I come here today, because since 1999, I have been the legal guardian for my 69 year old first cousin, Patricia Connolly, who has resided at Richmond State Supported Living Center since 1968. She was one of Richmond State School's first clients, having transferred there from the State School here in Austin.

My mother was sister to Patsy's mother Agnes Connolly. Although we lived in Indiana we spent much of the summer months with my grandfather and Patsy's family in Galveston. I am the oldest of my siblings and Patsy related to me the best. She was born with multiple birth defects and cerebral palsy. Her mother was the private secretary to Mr. Robert L. Moody of Moody National Bank when Patsy moved to Richmond. Because of Agnes' advocacy Richmond State School benefited greatly from Robert Moody's contributions- most notably the horse riding therapy unit.

Over the years I visited Patsy at Richmond and marveled at the care she was receiving. Her mother suffered from dementia in her last years and I became her guardian as well as Patsy's. I have visited Patsy at least three times a year since I took on that role. I do want to make it clear that I am not a Texas resident, tax payer or voter. I come not as a democrat or republican or even as a priest. I am a guardian of a person who is in the care of the State of Texas and who most probably would not be alive today had it not been for the care of the staff of RSSLC. She has been in three units there since I have been her guardian and I have been impressed with the staff of each house.

In the past five years she has endured some major and life-threatening illnesses. The latest was pneumonia due to aspiration. Before that she had some serious infections and a mild heart attack. In each case the staff members were right there to address her needs and save her life. I firmly believe that had she been out in community housing the chances of her making it through would have been very slim.

I urge this commission to keep the RSSLC open. I know there are others here who want the Austin facility and other campuses to remain open as well. That is because a good number of those who are being cared for in the state supported living centers will not get the care they need in a group home. I know there are some good community living situations and some of the clients in the state supported living centers do well in them but so many of our family members, that we parents and guardians are here to advocate for would not fare well in that situation.

We respectfully ask that you keep as many of the state supported living centers open for as many of these precious people that you can.