

House Bill 974
House Judiciary Committee
Civil Actions – Child Sexual Abuse – Definition and Statute of Limitations
(Hidden Predator Act of 2020)
**** SUPPORT ****

February 20, 2020

Written Testimony:

I grew up here in Annapolis 30 years ago and am a survivor of child sexual abuse. I wish to start by thanking the committee for allowing anonymous testimony today. Otherwise I wouldn't have the courage to speak. I, and other survivors I know in Maryland, have been attacked physically, verbally or sexually by our perpetrators and members of the public for speaking out about our experiences. But I can be reached at the email address at the bottom of the following page if needed.

From age 6-9, I was sexually abused by my **pediatrician**. Whenever I saw him, whether it was for an earache or an annual physical, he always insisted on examining my genitalia with his bare hands.

Eventually my parents took me to see someone new, who they hoped could give clarity about how I was being treated. So at age 9, I started seeing a different pediatrician. At my first appointment, I told him what had happened with the previous doctor, but he never reported it to police. Instead he referred me to a therapist, who also never reported it to the police. Neither the second pediatrician, my parents, nor the therapists that I saw ever brought it up again, after starting to see the second pediatrician.

Today, I live with diagnoses of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, Anxiety Disorder and Panic Disorder, all as a result of the abuse I experienced as a child. I've spent at least **\$67,550** out-of-pocket on therapy, psychiatric medications, and other mental health treatment including multiple inpatient psychiatric hospitalizations for suicide attempts.

I reported both of the pediatricians to police last year. As far as I can tell, nothing has come of their investigation.

I learned recently that during the careers of both these pediatricians, there were other patients, parents, and medical professionals who also complained about them. But I've been told that there is no procedure for telling a doctor to stop practicing. So both of my pediatricians retired at a ripe old age, 15-20 years after I last saw them. I've been told they were both "grandfathered in" for their last decades in business, and didn't have to be fellows of the American Board of Pediatrics or show continuing education to practice.

I've also learned recently that the second pediatrician, the one to whom I reported my abuse, was on the Board of Trustees at my school. I went to **The Key School**, which — I'm sure you'll hear about from other survivors today — is now known to have covered up decades of child sexual abuse by teachers. I knew about teachers assaulting, dating or even marrying other students for least 11 of the 13 years I attended the school. In fact, spent my childhood thinking that sort of behavior was normal — it certainly seemed widely accepted by the adults at my school.

I reported all the teachers I remembered abusing students to the attorney-investigators that the school hired in 2018 for investigating claims of sexual abuse. However, only one of the teachers that I reported appeared in the investigators' report. Three of the teachers who I reported and were excluded from the report still work for the school today. I've spoken to other former students who were assaulted or more severely sexually abused by these current teachers. Some of those former students also reported to the investigators, the police, and/or the school directly. When I approached the school last year to discuss my concerns about current teachers, the response by the Head of School felt dismissive, disrespectful and intended to intimidate.

The Head of School acknowledged privately that he'd heard claims about at least one current teacher. However, the school's website still states publicly that no claims about current teachers have ever been made. The school has told us there is nothing they can do, and the police say the same. So these three teachers still remain working for the school today.

The second pediatrician that I saw, the one to whom I reported that my prior pediatrician had abused me, came referred by someone at Key. As I said, he happened to serve on the Board of Trustees at the time. He was also on the board when several survivors first approached the school decades ago to report what teachers had done to them in the 1970s and 1980s. No one reported their teachers when these children were being abused, nor did they report when the survivors came forward — including my pediatrician while he was on the board.

I learned recently that before being elected to the Board, that doctor was also the pediatrician of some of Key's survivors — while their teachers were abusing them. He did not report when those patients were being sexually abused by adults, and was later elected to the board of the same institution that harbored those patients' abusers.

That second pediatrician is still a well-respected member of the Key community and the Annapolis community at large. He retired in financial comfort and lives in a mansion in Annapolis. The first pediatrician also lives in comfort around Annapolis.

I am unable to work due to mental health issues that resulted from my abuse as a child. I'm on **Social Security Disability** (SSDI), which is funded by our tax dollars and I'm only middle-aged.

Prior to going on SSDI, I worked for about 23 years. During that time, I missed at least one full day of work per week for mental health issues as a result of being abused as a child. I estimate that the income I lost during those 23 years because of missing work due to my childhood abuse was at least **\$84,408**.

As much as we want to believe that the institutions to which we entrust our children are doing the right thing and protecting them, that's not always the case. I've been betrayed by two different pediatric offices, my school, my therapists, a couple of Maryland journalists who I asked for help, and the criminal justice system. In addition, the impact — both financial and emotional — on me in the wake of my abuse and betrayal by the institutions charged with protecting me has been enormous.

I urge lawmakers to please do the right thing and help protect the citizens who are least able to protect ourselves, by passing House Bill 974. It's time to shift the burden away from victims, and onto the perpetrators and the institutions that keep perpetrators safe.

Thank you for your time and attention. My email address is fogoisland@protonmail.com.