



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB001
Civil Actions – Child Sexual Abuse – Definition, Damages, and Statute of Limitations
(The Child Victims Act of 2023)
****SUPPORT****

TO: Hon. Luke Clippinger and members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Maryland Catholics for Action

DATE: March 2, 2023

My name is Susan Kerin and I represent Maryland Catholics for Action. We are a coalition of lay and religious Catholics who support victims' rights related to the clergy sex abuse scandal. We feel that our institutional leadership has abandoned our injured brothers and sisters. Our leaders have not provided the transparency and accountability necessary to ensure that these criminal activities will end.

Recent pollings reveal that many US Catholics share our concerns. In a 2019 poll by the Economist, one in three US Catholics reported having an unfavorable view of our leadership.(<https://bit.ly/2HEjKpe>). A Gallup poll also in 2019 noted that 37% of US Catholics are personally questioning whether to remain Catholic because of the scandal.
<https://bit.ly/2P9msqR>

It is important to keep in mind that these polls may actually be minimizing laity concerns. That is because most Catholics have no idea how much money and lobbying resources that our leaders have been spending to undermine bills that provide survivors rights and protection of our children.

Victims have shared with us the stigmatizing responses they have received of not being believed, judged or dismissed. Or hearing magnificent statements from the church hierarchy which never materialize into substantive support. The cost burden of this crime lies predominantly on the victims.

Anyone who is Catholic should regard this scandal as an existential issue: We are facing moral bankruptcy. The laity are the treasures of the church. We are the ones that provide the financial

offertories and the hundreds of thousands of hours in charitable work. Many of us have an alternative narrative compared to the Bishops and I ask that you consider our voices when you think of the Catholic church.

We would also like to share that it is incredibly difficult for victims to come forward. False claims of sexual abuse [are extremely rare](#). ([Link to second resource](#)) Rather researchers estimate that only 38% of victims ever come forward and usually it is to a close friend rather than an authority.

HB001: The Child Victims Act of 2023 is, first and foremost what all victims of child sexual abuse deserve. Resources and choices to help them heal. But it is also important to us Catholics who feel we are the “treasures” of the Catholic Church accountable and heartbroken by this scandal. Our futures are intertwined. This committee has an opportunity to solidify Maryland as a leader in children rights and protections rather than a protector of institutions. We urge this committee to issue a favorable report.

Executive Committee

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