

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1
Civil Actions – Child Sexual Abuse – Definition, Damages, and Statute of
Limitations
(The Child Victims Act of 2023)
****SUPPORT****

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

FROM: Jean Hargadon Wehner

DATE: March 2, 2023

My name is Jean Hargadon Wehner and I strongly support HB1 with the sponsor's amendments as it would abolish the SOL for Child Sexual Abuse. I was sexually abused and raped at Archbishop Keough High school by Joseph Maskell and others, between the years of 1967 & 1971. Accomplices to these crimes are the institutions that betrayed their trusting communities by allowing their children to be left in harm's way. The trauma I endured during those years was so great, that in order to survive, I had to sever from that young victim and bury her deep within my subconscious. This is called dissociative amnesia, otherwise known as repressed memories. I began remembering the abuse in 1992, at the age of 38.

I met with Archdiocesan representatives and gave 2 formal statements. Following the first one, Joseph Maskell, who was in his fifties, was removed from his parish and sent for evaluation.

In 1994 Teresa Lancaster and I agreed to file a civil suit against Joseph Maskell and others. I said yes, not to bankrupt the Church, but because the Archdiocese returned Maskell to work as a pastor at a neighboring parish. The thought that he was in the area and knew that I had told the "secret" terrified me. I had visions of him shooting me and my family with the gun he threatened me with at Keough. We lost the case due to the court's decision that repressed memories were not scientifically proven.

The science behind the effects trauma has on the brain has grown, allowing dissociative amnesia to be understood and accepted. Like any physical wound, our mind and spirit cannot be forced to heal, in order to comply with the courts. Because of this I believe having a statute of limitations imposed on victims of childhood sexual abuse only benefits the perpetrators.

I respectfully urge a favorable report for HB1 with the Sponsor's amendments.

Thank you!