

**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: David S. Schappelle

DATE: March 2, 2023

My name is David Schappelle, and I support the Child Victims Act.

I currently live in Ellicott City (Howard County), with my wife of 20 years, and our 5 kids, sons ages 16 and 14, and daughters are 12, 10, and 5. I have a Bachelor of Arts degree in History, and a Master of Science degree in HR Management, and I'm the Director of HR at a government contracting firm headquartered in Columbia, MD. I am currently 45 years old, and 4 years ago I learned (that's the best way I can describe it) that I'm a survivor of child sex abuse and rape.

In spring of 2019, I began to recall horrific, repressed memories of being sexually abused repeatedly and raped by a Catholic priest during the fall of 1986, when my family had just moved to Gaithersburg. I was 9 years old, starting 4th grade at Diamond Elementary, and religious ed at St. Rose of Lima Parish, which is where my abuse occurred.

My abuser was, then Father, Wayland Brown, from the Archdiocese of Savannah Georgia. He was in Maryland at St. Luke's Institute in Silver Spring, which is a treatment facility for pedophile Catholic priests, yet he continued to have unchecked access to children like me. He died in 2019, while serving time for raping children back in Georgia after he left Maryland! He was never cured, but rather, he was protected and enabled.

A few months ago, I recalled a stark memory of bedtime the night after I was raped at gun point, during a church picnic for kids. I laid in my bed looking up at the ceiling, my 9-year-old inner self was trying to deal with what happened. My rear was still sore, and I was too embarrassed, confused, and scared to tell anyone what happened. I told myself just "forget everything and try to live a normal life like everyone else. I didn't want to be different or let this hold me back."

These past four years I've been reliving this trauma as I remember new things. People around me have seen the intense effects on me, and some in my family are dealing with collateral damage. I lost 30 pounds in about a month, and I'm managing my PTSD, anxiety, and depression through ongoing therapy and medications, totaling over \$60k so far.

I wish that these memories are not real, but they are, and they cut so deeply when I was 9. I could not deal with it as a child, but now as a 45-year-old dealing with this known past, I can tell you that this is devastating to say the least. It is important to no longer sweep away the past, or keep it locked up in a container. Closure to me means getting answers and acknowledgement from parties involved, financial help to pay for my family's ongoing therapy, and importantly, to have assurance that this is not still happening today. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 686.

AS A RECAP, AND FOR FURTHER ELABORATION:

- My Name: David Schappelle
- Hometown (or where abuse occurred): Gaithersburg, MD (St. Rose of Lima Catholic Parish)
- Current place of residence = Ellicott City, MD
- Current age = 45
- Age when abuse occurred = 9
- Age when abuse was remembered = 42
- Occupation = Director of Human Resources for a government contractor in the healthcare IT field, headquarters in Columbia, MD
- Education = graduated with diploma from Quince Orchard High School in Gaithersburg; Graduated with BA degree in History from University of Maryland College Park; Graduated with MS degree in Management of HR from University of Maryland University College
- Visuals = here are my school photos: 1985-86 (Left; taken one year prior to my sexual abuse and rape), and 1986-87 (Right; taken around the time of my abuse)



1. WHAT I REMEMBER ABOUT THE FIRST TIME I WAS ABUSED, AND HOW LONG THE ABUSE LASTED, AND HOW AND WHY IT ENDED

The first memory that I recalled was about the first time I was abused. It occurred during our weekly CCD class, and when we did “practice” reconciliation, so I was 1-on-1 with the priest, (then Father) Wayland Brown. My family had just moved to Gaithersburg during the summer of 1986, about a month prior to the abuse, so I still didn’t know any of the other kids in my class. I remember being in the class with all the other kids, and he introduced himself to the class because he was from out of town. Nobody in the class of kids knew him. I recall him saying his name was Father Brown, and then one of the kids asked, “you mean like the color brown?” He chuckled and said “yes.” A little later in the class he asked us where we think God lives inside us. I remember raising my hand and indicating that God lives inside

our hearts. He said I was right, and he asked me to show the class here my heart was, and he asked me to lift my shirt up, and so I did to show the class where my heart was above my belly. Then the class transitioned to us having practice Reconciliation with him. He went into another small classroom, and we went in one at a time.

I recalled the next memory is of when it was my turn to go in to the 1-on-1 confessional practice. When I went in, he greeted me with a friendly smile. He remembered that I was the boy who said where God lives in our heart. He asked me again and I showed him. He tickled my belly — that's how close he was to me. He told me a secret that God lives in us a little lower in our body and throughout he is in us. He said that he had a special sacrament or something like that, and if I wanted it. Of course, I said, sure, I'll have something special. He said it would just take him a couple minutes to prepare it. He walked away to the other side of the small room, no more than 10 feet away. He had his back to me. He was wearing a green priest gown (whatever you call those Alb robes). He said he was almost done. I could tell he was doing something because his arms were moving, and he was shaking a little. Then he said he was done. He turned around and walked towards me, and he held out his left-hand palm up and there was a gooey clear and white substance in his palm. He said I should consume this special substance because he comes straight from God. I said I didn't want to, and I became very uncomfortable, and I wanted to run away and out of there. His face became angry, and he told me to drink it. I remember putting my mouth reluctantly up to his hand and my tongue touching the substance and then I got grossed out and I said I couldn't. That's when I saw for a moment and then felt his right arm swing and he slapped me with such force that it knocked me backwards. He said that God will be very angry if I didn't accept his holy offering. So, I took it and hated it.

I went back to the room full of classmates and had to pretend that nothing happened. I had already started to black out these experiences.

My head was still ringing a bit throughout the rest of that class. When my mom picked me up, she met me, and Father Brown and he said how wonderful I was and that my mom should be very proud of me. My mom noticed that the side of my face was red, and Father Brown quickly claimed that I was running around with other kids during break, and I tripped and fell. I went along with the story because I didn't know what else to do.

My abuse lasted for a couple months during the fall of 1986. There were a handful of instances of when I was pulled out of class, or away from the other students so I was 1-on-1 with the priest, and one time there was two priests who abused me at the same time. It was a night when the church was having movie night for kids, and I was pulled out by another priest, who I allege to be John (Jack) Myslinski, who drove me to pick up Father Brown. When we picked up Brown, he parked the car and they both got in the back seat on either side of me, and I had to give them oral pleasure. When done, they drove me back to the church and I rejoined the kids in the movie watching and other activities.

My abuse ended around November of 1986 because Father Brown had to go back home to Savannah Georgia. At a fall picnic at the church (St. Rose of Lima in Gaithersburg) it was the last time I was abused. He took me into a small old house that used to be on the property. He took me back through the house to a bedroom on the main level. He showed me a gun. I asked why he had one, and he said even Gods people need to protect themselves. Then he told me he also can't have me telling anyone about what happened or is happening. He then told me about condoms and asked if my dad had showed me about them. I said no and he instructed me to put one on his penis. Then he told me to pull my shorts down. I was wearing my white MSI soccer shorts and jersey because I had a soccer game that same day as the

picnic. He had me turn around and bend over a bed. He said it would hurt just a little and don't be afraid. It hurt so much that I passed out. When I awoke, he was done and was packing away from me I turned around in a daze. He told me that I needed to drink Gods special consecration by taking off the condom and drinking it from it. I couldn't do it. He poured it into his hand, and I couldn't do it. He then had a bit of sympathy and said it was Ok, and that I had done enough today. Then he told me to say the Hail Mary prayer with him, which we did even though I didn't know or could barely speak. Then he told me to leave and go play with all the kids. Later when the picnic was ending and my mom picked me up, he again spoke with me and my mom, and again told me how special I was and that she should be so proud. He was Al smiles and friendliness when he told my mom that I could come with him or visit him. He asked my mom if I could go to Savannah Georgia with him, right in front of me! I couldn't say a word.

On the ride home from the picnic, my mom asked why my white shorts were a little brown in a spot, and I made up a story about playing soccer with the other kids and I did a slide tackle. She asked why then it smelled like poop, so I said that there must have been dog poop or something on the ground. We made it home and I washed those shorts and washed all the memories away.

## 2. TO THIS DAY, THE PERSONS WHO ABUSED ME NEVER EXPRESSED REMORSE, ACKNOWLEDGED THEIR ROLE, NOR APOLOGIZED FOR THEIR ACTIONS

No. By the time I had recalled my abuse, Wayland Brown was already serving his second sentence for child sexual abuse. Then he died in prison before I could even know the trauma that I survived.

When I began remembering in 2019 the abuse that occurred in 1986 (33 years later), I began to do some research to help remember things. I discovered that in 1985/86 Wayland Brown was in Silver Spring, MD being treated at St. Luke's Institute, which is a Catholic funded medical rehabilitation center that the church sends alleged pedophile priests in hopes that they will be saved. He was sent there by the Archdiocese of Savannah Georgia because he was already a known pedophile. Unfortunately, their treatment of him at St. Luke's Institute was under gross negligence and they allowed him to still be active in church CCD classes with children.

## 3. THAT CHAPTER IN MY CHILDHOOD HAS IMPACTED MY LIFE, INCLUDING RELATIONS WITH MY FAMILY AND VIEWS ABOUT MY FAITH

I repressed (almost immediately) all memories of the abuse. I believe my mind did that so that I could live a "normal" life. In fact, one of my recalled memories is of me in bed (it was the night of the day I was raped in the house during the picnic). I laid there in bed with my knees up in the air. My rear end still in discomfort. I looked up at the ceiling and I told myself to never think or talk about this or else I would be in a lot of trouble. I told myself to forget about it, and so I could live a normal life like all the other kids. So that's what I did. I couldn't handle it then, and I can barely handle it now.

As a kid, I went on receive confirmation in the Catholic Church at St. Rose of Lima, then graduated high school at Quince Orchard, and then college at University of Maryland, and then to try to develop a marriage relationship and grow a strong professional career. I have always done my best to be my best. I was captain of my high school volleyball team, runner up county champions on my senior year. I went on to play volleyball at UMCP for the boy's club team. I met my wife as students at Maryland and we married in 2002. It was very important to her and her family that I was also Roman Catholic, which I was. We have 5 children together, which we are raising in the Catholic Church at St. Louis in Clarksville, MD.

When my memories resurfaced in 2019 our youngest was 2 and our oldest was 13. The trauma of reliving the abuse has been too much to handle and I became disengaged with everyone and everything around me as they saw me go through a severe mental breakdown. I began to seek therapy and psychiatric care to deal with the extreme mental and physiological stress. I lost over 30 pounds in about a month, and I could barely eat for several days at end. My wife and I began a couple counselor too to help with our commutation and to strengthen our relationship, which had taken a huge hit when my memories came back. Since 2019, we have incurred around \$15k a year in medical therapy, and prescription bills.

I suffer from a history of vices however, which I now attribute to my abuse. My mental symptoms are very difficult to describe, but essentially the abuse left me feeling inferior to others, depressed with ideation and thoughts of suicide, anxiety about my self-image and self-worth, and extreme bouts of anger and rage that are unwarranted. My tendency is to suppress things that I don't like or disagree with, and then becoming enraged about them later.

My wife is devout Catholic, and she is still raising our kids in the Catholic Church, where they attend CCD and attend mass weekly. I used to be part of that experience; however, I am no longer capable of attending masses or church activities due to the anxiety and stress it puts my mind into. I am very conflicted with everything in the past 4 years since reliving this trauma, and even now as an educated and experienced adult this is incredibly taxing on me and my relationship with my wife and children, and other family members. My relationship with the Catholic Church institution was crushed because of the lack of available support they gave me. When my memories returned in 2019, I reached out to the Archdiocese of Washington, DC, and they had a person in charge of child victims and sexual abuse prevention, Courtney Chase, and she told me that I would need to come in to speak to a panel of clergy and lawyers. I have not had the energy, or courage, or tolerance to go into Washington, DC to meet with people from the organization that enabled som. The abuse continues to be a strain on my relationship with my wife and family, who live with me and see me daily be visibly agitated, frustrated, and anxious in social situations. My depression is greater because I feel my children see me now as a weak or unhealthy person, which I am not (or at least I try not to be). The collateral damage this has imposed on my family is immeasurable, and especially the effects it had on my children is yet fully known.

I remain outside of the Catholic Church, but I will go to mass with my family for Christmas, Easter, and my children's first communions and confirmations, etc. Rather than religious, I am a spiritual person of faith who believes there is a bigger master plan for all of us. I believe in signs and mini miracles (like getting the chance to tell my story in hopes that another person also feels strong enough to tell theirs).

#### 4. DO I THINK IT IS POSSIBLE FOR ME TO FIND CLOSURE, OR OBTAIN JUSTICE?

For me it will be difficult because my primary abuser died, however, there was a second priest involved in at least one incident. That priest left/resigned from the church around 2010 or so, and still lives In Massachusetts doing ministry (though not directly for the Catholic Church). It is my allegation that this priest is Father Jack Myslinski, however there were no formal legal charges made because there is no tangible evidence, other than circumstantial, to support my allegation.

Besides the perpetrators themselves, Brown and Myslinski, I would like to hold accountable for my abuse the Archdiocese of Savannah Georgia, the St. Luke's Institute, and the Archdiocese of Washington, DC for allowing and enabling the sexual abuse and rape of children.

5. I AM SUPPORTING THE PROPOSED CHANGE IN MARYLAND LAW GIVING SURVIVORS SUCH AS MYSELF A NEW CHANCE TO FINALLY HOLD ABUSERS ACCOUNTABLE THROUGH THE COURTS.

Because there is so much interconnected between the survivors' stories. There is a common denominator in so much of our abuse. If the law is changed and survivors are given the opportunity to present a case, then others may recall that priest or similar instances. The healing from abuse is directly correlated with the acknowledgment from the abuser (or the institution of the abuser) and publicly condemn the acts of the past, make them right financially to cover all medical bills and costs that result from decades of quietly suffering. We must hold these institutions accountable for more than just a "Sorry" and "We've changed- we are not the same now as we were then."

I would like to make inquiry into the practices of the St. Luke's Institute, especially during the time of my abuse. I cannot imagine that I am the only child ever to be abused by a priest who was there to receive treatment for their pedophilia.

6. CLOSING REMARKS

The cartoon parody of Catholic Priests who sexually abuse children really isn't funny because it is undeniably and unmistakably true. The humor pokes fun at our entire society because it shows the threat is real and right in front of us, and yet we are not doing enough yet to change it and hold the church accountable. This bill will serve to help cancel that cartoon and make that chapter truly a thing of the past.

I now understand that child sexual abuse (and the tsunami wave effects of it) can be anywhere, even in your own home, or family, or someone you know. Imagine a friend of yours, a neighbor, a brother or sister, brother-in-law or sister-in-law, your cousin, or work colleague, who suddenly start to withdraw and reveals they were sexually abused as a child.

There is no doubt that too many people in Maryland were sexually abused as children in our living past. Some don't even know (literally haven't recalled yet) that they were sexually abused as a child. Or maybe they do know and have been living with the trauma their entire lives, where some have not dealt with it or had closure. Some have even ended their life. Moreover, please think of me as an example of someone who had repressed their traumatic experience, in my case I endured sexual abuse and rape as a nine-year-old, and as someone who had no cognitive awareness to come forward with any allegations until I was 42 and somehow the memories started to surface.

For all these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 1 with the Sponsor's amendments.