

**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**

My name is Teresa Lancaster. I am an Attorney, a survivor and an advocate for victims of childhood sexual abuse.

I was abused between 1970-1972 at Archbishop Keough High School and featured in the documentary “The Keepers,” which exposed the sex abuse ring at Keough that was run by Father Maskell.

I was unable to come forward about my abuse back in the 70’s because Maskell convinced me that I would not be believed and he threatened me with his gun. I feared for my life, which is common amongst survivors. RAINN reports that 20% of survivors list fear of retaliation as the reason that they did not come forward. I also struggled with the fact that the person who abused me was not only someone I trusted, but also had the respect of my entire community.

Survivors typically take years to come forward about their abuse. The severe nature of the trauma that was endured, coupled with the high social position that the abuser often hold are also factors which prevent survivors from coming forward earlier. Other factors such as depression and substance abuse are hurdles survivors often need to overcome.

Studies show that the average age to disclose abuse is 52. Reasons for the delays are specific to the individual. When Jean and I were finally ready to come forward, and started our civil suit, we quickly realized that the institution that we once held our trust in, would again betray us. Cardinal Keeler knew that our case was credible, but used the current SOL to make our case go away. The betrayal of a trusted institution adds another difficult layer onto the trauma of abuse.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to issue a *favorable* report on **HB 974: Civil Actions – Child Sexual Abuse – Definition and Statute of Limitations**.