

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 134:  
CIVIL ACTIONS – CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE – DEFINITION AND STATUTE OF  
LIMITATIONS  
\*\*SUPPORT\*\***

**TO: Hon. Chairman William C. Smith, Hon. Vice Chair Jeff Waldstreicher, Senate  
Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**FROM: David Lorenz**

**DATE: January 2021**

My name is David Lorenz and I was sexually abused by a priest, my mentor and friend, at the age of 16. It was a difficult time for me and I almost drowned in my anguish. I managed to pull myself together and I became reasonably successful. But I had a secret that I told to no one and it had a profound effect on my life and how badly I handled some critical situations. I fully expected to take my secret to the grave but at the age of 32, events transpired that forced me to admit to family and friends what had happened to me. That is when my healing began. For most survivors, it is a much later age if they can do it at all. Details of my abuse and recovery can be found in past testimony and I do not have the time to repeat it today. I am also the Maryland director for SNAP – Survivor’s Network of those Abused by Priests.

I have been testifying on behalf of changing SOL legislation for more than a dozen years with little to show for it because we have been opposed by one organization – the Roman Catholic Church. Even though only about 4% of abuse cases involve the Catholic Church, they have felt it necessary to lock 24 out of every 25 survivors out of an ability to seek justice. We know from the Pennsylvania grand jury, the Boston and Manchester attorney’s general reports and a dozen or so other reports from around the country that the Church has conspired to cover up these crimes. Not to mention reports from Australia, Ireland, Poland and a few other countries. The behavior is the same. Hide the crime and move the perpetrator where he can prey on a new crop of victims. And they knew it. They covered it up until the SOL ran out.

The Church will tell you that they reach out to victims and ‘do everything they can to help victims. But what they don’t tell you is that they still conspire to hide abusive priests (note the headlines about Buffalo NY 1/10/2021) and they mold laws to protect themselves so they cannot be held responsible for the actions they took to protect perpetrators. The most egregious act came in 2017 in this very assembly when the Church snuck in a last-minute amendment to a bill purported to help victims that was introduced in the closing days of the General Assembly that made child sexual abuse a product liability by changing it to ‘statute of repose’. Even the sponsors of the bill were unaware of the change and were outraged when this change came to light. Knowing this, I don’t know how anyone can possibly believe the Church’s intentions are anything but about protecting the institution and not about helping survivors. It certainly does not fit with their statement that they will do anything they can to help survivors.

The Church also feigns that they might have to declare bankruptcy if there are too many lawsuits filed against them. If that happens, they may be restricted in performing their charitable acts. Research on the financial health of dioceses that have declared bankruptcy over the past decades due to child abuse lawsuits actually shows that following bankruptcy their financial health actually improves ... significantly. The real reason they file for bankruptcy is to hide disclosure of their actions from being revealed in a courtroom. Plain and simple.

***For these reasons, I urge a favorable committee report and passage of House Bill 263 & Senate Bill 134 without amendments.***