

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 686
Civil Actions – Child Sexual Abuse – Definition, Damages, and Statute of Limitations
(The Child Victims Act of 2023)
****SUPPORT****

TO: Hon. William C. Smith, Jr. Chair, and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: David Lorenz

DATE: February 23, 2023

My name is David Lorenz and I am a survivor of child sexual abuse. I have been coming before this body for the last 18 years in the hopes of updating this state's archaic child abuse SOL so that survivors can get the justice they deserve and Maryland children would be safe. No argument that I have provided has been convincing. The Catholic Church, the only significant opposition to this bill, their arguments have prevailed. Will they continue to prevail, we have to wait and see if you all will be convinced by the testimony of the survivors, supporters and experts you hear from today or the arguments put forth by the current bishop Of Washington, Cardinal Gregory, that the Church has reformed. Remember this is the same Wilton Gregory who famously professed in 2004 that the scandal is history– despite the fact that Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, now shamed and defrocked because of his abuse of children and young seminarians, was the sole developer of the child abuse policy for the diocese of Washington – which covers 5 counties in Maryland.

I could talk about my abuse but I've done that so many times in past testimony that I won't repeat myself but it is in the record from previous years. In my role as Maryland director for SNAP (Survivor's Network of those Abused by Priests), I often field calls from survivors who are tentatively reaching out for the first time. They finally overcome the shame and the guilt that was thrust upon them as children. I can usually recognize them as a survivor by just their initial telephone greeting. Sometimes all they want is validation from someone – someone who understands their plight and their agony. Having received his permission, I want to tell you about one of those people. His name is Keith. He is 62 years old, receiving state assistance after living a life that was not extremely stable and lead him to prison for a while. He grew up in a poor section of Baltimore where he hung out with many friends around the neighborhood. Despite having suffered a stroke a few years ago, he can still tell you the names, and nicknames of most of his childhood friends. It sounded like he had a wonderful youth despite being somewhat impoverished. He was not Catholic but started to hang out with the charismatic priest, Brother Mike, at St. Ann's Catholic Church around the block. Brother Mike was friends with all of the kids in the neighborhood and took them on trips. On one weekend trip to a camp, Brother Mike repeatedly raped Keith. Keith was never the same after that. He was always afraid people would find out and think that he was 'less of a man'. In his later teen years, he bought a gun to prove that he was a MAN. Ultimately that did not end well and Keith spent time in prison. In his



statement to the diocese and the Attorney General's investigation team, Keith told them that he knew that other boys had been abused by Brother Mike, and that it was well known in the neighborhood that the pastor, Father Sam, had at least one boy toy that never left his side.

Why do I tell Keith's story? There have been numerous independent investigations of more than a few dioceses around the country – The 2018 Pennsylvania Grand Jury report Catholic child sexual abuse is one of the more well-known reports. These independent reports reveal a disturbing pattern that the Church regularly uses poor intercity and poor rural areas as dumping grounds for wayward priests. They know that these communities are too oppressed to speak up if they think something is amiss with their priests. They are extremely grateful to even have a priest and too afraid that the bishop may leave them without one if they report suspicion or even knowledge of an abusive priest. And so, the abuse continues and those parishes are left with an overwhelming number of abuse victims. The Maryland AG's motion to disclose indicates the same behavior may have taken place in Baltimore where it states that "Although no parish was safe, some congregations and schools were assigned multiple abusive priests, and a few had more than one sexually abusive priest at the same time. One congregation was assigned eleven sexually abusive priests over 40 years. The sexual abuse was so pervasive that victims were sometimes reporting sexual abuse to priests who were perpetrators themselves." While we don't yet know which parishes these were, do you honestly think it was done at affluent parishes? For all of the Keith's that were raised in the economically depressed areas of Baltimore and other cities, for those in the poorer rural areas who were abused because the diocese dumped predators there because they knew no one would push back, I urge you to vote favorably on HB1