

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: Christopher Gavagan

DATE: February 23, 2023

My name is Chris Gavagan I am an advisor with the US Olympic Committee's Safe Sport program and had the honor of delivering the keynote address at their inaugural SafeSport Leadership Conference. I have produced and directed a documentary project called *Coached into Silence* which deals specifically with sexual abuse in youth sports. The silence referred to in the title is threefold: the silence of shame victims can experience, the silence of institutions protecting themselves first, and finally the legal silencing of the victims in their search for justice.

I came by my expertise in youth sports safety the wrong way, by falling victim to a coach who also happened to be a child sex predator. Over the years, I have been forced to watch, legally mute, while my own former abuser found his next victim, and his next victim. By leaving perpetrators unnamed and unexposed, and institutions unaccountable it guarantees that more children will fall victim. This is not a "maybe" it is a certainty. More silence, more victims. Pedophiles don't quit, they must be stopped.

The most direct way that I can illustrate this point, is to provide this link to the video of an interview that I conducted with my own former coach and abuser. This 4 minute video shows him admitting sexual abuse, defending it as a "lesson", and then laughing with relief at the statute of limitations: <https://vimeo.com/coachedintosilence/coachsolvva>

I strongly support SB 686 as tool to give survivors back their voice and bring accountability in the effort to prevent any child from becoming The Next Victim.