

**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: Elizabeth Letourneau, PhD, Director, Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse, and Professor, Department of Mental Health, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

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DATE: February 23, 2023

We are Elizabeth Letourneau and Rebecca Fix of the Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Dr. Letourneau has 35 years of experience as a clinically trained researcher focused on child sexual abuse prevention, practice, and policy. She is an internationally recognized leader who has advised the National Academies of Science, the World Health Organization, and other state, national, international and Big Tech governance bodies. Dr. Fix is a child and forensic psychologist whose expertise on child sexual abuse is evidenced by more than 60 publications in scientific journals.

The views expressed here are our own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of Johns Hopkins University.

We urge a favorable report on SB 686, Civil Actions - Child Sexual Abuse - Definition, Damages, and Statute of Limitations (The Child Victims Act of 2023).

The provisions proposed in SB686 are critical because research by Dr. Letourneau and others shows that most survivors of child sexual abuse delay disclosing their abuse until years and even decades after it occurred; many never disclose at all. Even when disclosures do occur, they are typically to friends or family and not to authorities.

Approximately 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys in the United States will become victims of child sexual abuse. Abuse increases risk for health problems including but not limited to PTSD, heart disease, cervical cancer, and smoking, thereby increasing morbidity and mortality, and reducing quality of life.

Our research also found that abuse costs each victim more than \$280,000 in lost earnings and other economic impacts.

SB 686 provides survivors with an avenue for seeking justice and redress; it also serves as a motivator for others to avoid engaging in or shielding abusive behaviors. History has shown that many institutions invest in preventing and addressing child sexual abuse **only after being held accountable** for shielding the actions of their members.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 686. Thank you for your time and consideration.