

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1
Civil Actions – Child Sexual Abuse – Definition, Damages, and Statute of Limitations
(The Child Victims Act of 2023)
****SUPPORT****

TO: Hon. Luke Clippinger, Chair, and members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Carolyn Surrick

DATE: March 2, 2023

I know that this will be a challenging day for you. I know this because I have been here before and this testimony is very, very difficult to hear.

At a certain point, it will be hard for you to pay attention.

You will start checking your email. Looking at your phone. Making notes about things unrelated to what is actually happening in this room.

It will be almost impossible to look at the person sitting at this podium. If they show you a photo of the child that they were when this terrible thing was done to them, you will not be able to square it with the person who is actually speaking. There will be no relationship between that beautiful child in the picture and the broken person who is trying to just make it through their testimony.

This is what happens when decades pass, and there is no justice.

We can't move forward. We can't heal. The event that destroyed our childhoods continues to haunt us, because, indeed, the child inside of us remains scarred.

You do not need to decide if the school or the church is a different place now. You do not need to decide if institutions have changed. You do not need to decide who should be held accountable. Those are not your decisions to make. You just need to make it possible for us to have our day in court.

You can help us. You can allow us to seek justice. Whether we find it or not, well, that's not possible to know.

No one, no one, has ever been held accountable for what happened at Key School. Or Archbishop Keogh. Or any of the other places that kids in Maryland went to school or church, with their parents thinking they were safe.

Some of our friends have died, and for them there will never be justice – and these institutions understand that if they can put off going to court for another year or another five years, there will be fewer and fewer of us. Do not allow them to win this war of attrition.

And please, when you get to that moment today when it's just too much, close your eyes for a second, inhale, exhale, and hang in there with us. We need you to know why this vote is so important. And then we need you to vote - in favor of justice.