



March 26, 2025

**HB 1378**

**Child Sexual Abuse Claims Against the State – Time Limitation**

**House Judiciary Committee**

**Position: Favorable with Amendments**

The Maryland Catholic Conference requests a Favorable with Amendments report on House Bill 1378. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

HB 1378 would establish a clear deadline for filing claims under the Child Victims Act (CVA) against the State or a unit of State government. Specifically, this bill prohibits claims from being filed on or after January 1, 2026. While we support the goal of HB 1378 to create a framework for resolving long-standing claims in an orderly manner, **we strongly urge the committee to ensure that the same deadline applies equally to all institutions, both public and private.**

Institutional defendants, including both government and non-government entities, desire to fairly compensate victims. However, defending claims that arose decades ago presents immense challenges—key witnesses may have passed away, memories have faded, records have been lost, and physical locations may no longer exist. These challenges make it extremely difficult to fairly adjudicate such cases.

Additionally, reopening previously unasserted claims from many decades past creates the risk of enormous liability for institutions, which must also balance their financial responsibilities to continue serving their communities. By setting a deadline for filing claims, HB 1378 allows institutions to plan for compensating victims in a structured and equitable manner rather than face the indefinite and unpredictable liabilities that currently exist under the CVA.

As written, this bill only establishes a deadline for claims filed against the State or a unit of State government while leaving private institutions exposed to claims indefinitely. This

unequal treatment is both unfair and inconsistent with the assurances made in prior legislative debates that private institutions would be treated equitably alongside public institutions.

Publicly reported information shows that thousands of claims have been made against the State under the CVA, demonstrating that the State is responsible for the largest number of potential claims of child sexual abuse. **It is therefore illogical and unjust to impose a stricter deadline only on claims against state entities while allowing claims against private institutions to continue indefinitely.**

**There is no principled basis for treating victims of child sexual abuse in state institutions differently from those who suffered abuse in private institutions.** In 2023, legislators committed to an equitable approach for all institutions. The overtly unequal treatment in HB 1378, as currently written, is not only poor policy but also unfairly targets nonprofit and religious organizations that have long served children in this state.

### **AMENDMENTS**

To ensure fairness and consistency, we strongly urge the committee to amend HB 1378 by striking the words “against the State or a unit of State government” on page 2, lines 19-20 and striking the words “Against the State” in the title of the bill.

**These amendments would ensure that the same deadline applies equally to all institutions, both public and private.** By making this change, the bill would uphold its intent to create a just and comprehensive resolution for all survivors while ensuring that institutions—whether governmental, nonprofit, or religious—can continue their vital work with financial stability.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a **favorable report with amendments** on House Bill 1378. Thank you for your time and consideration.