



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 10, 2026

SB 693 Civil Actions – Child Sexual Abuse – Repeal of Limitations on Attorney’s Fees

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Unfavorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers testimony in opposition to **Senate Bill 693**. 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.

This bill would repeal the recently enacted limits on attorney contingency fees in child sexual abuse cases—limits that currently ensure that counsel may receive no more than **20% of a settlement or 25% of a judgment** for claims filed on or after June 1, 2025.

The person who has been harmed must be at the center of any legal or policy response. Survivors of child sexual abuse have endured profound trauma. The legal system should ensure that the compensation awarded is directed primarily toward their healing, counseling, medical care, and long-term stability.

The fee limits enacted last year were designed precisely to safeguard this principle. They ensure that:

- **The majority of financial recovery goes to the survivor**, not to legal intermediaries.
- **Legal representation remains available**, but without disproportionate financial gain.
- **The system prioritizes justice and healing**, not profit.

Repealing these limits would shift the balance away from survivors and toward attorneys, allowing fees that could consume 30%, 40%, or even more of a victim’s compensation. That is neither just nor compassionate.

The current caps were enacted only last year. Repealing them now would be unfair for several reasons:

- **It undermines the intent of the legislature** to ensure that survivors—not attorneys—receive the bulk of any award.
- **It creates instability and unpredictability** for survivors who have been preparing to file claims under the new framework.
- **It risks incentivizing excessive legal fees** in cases where the moral priority should be the survivor’s well-being, not maximizing attorney profit.
- **It sends the wrong message:** that the financial interests of the legal profession outweigh the needs of those who have suffered grave harm.

Claims against the State of Maryland already have immense financial liability and exposure due to the Child Victim’s Act (CVA). This bill incentivizes profit-seeking attorneys to file even more claims against the state. An unfavorable report on this bill is warranted to limit further financial exposure against the state of Maryland, which is already estimated to be in the billions.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests an unfavorable report on **Senate Bill 693**.