

In support of HB722

My name is David Lorenz and I live in Bowie, MD. I am also a survivor of child sexual abuse at the hands of a Catholic priest. I am also one of the survivors responsible for helping pass the CVA in April of '23.

During the debates of the CVA on the general assembly, I was intimately involved in all of the hearings and discussions about victims of child sexual abuse and specifically those discussions pertaining to survivors that had been detailed in the newly released AG report detailing sexual abuse of over 600 children in the diocese of Baltimore. I would go so far as to say that it was this report that spurred the General Assembly to overwhelmingly vote in favor of the CVA in order to provide justice for those victims and the sexual abuse victims in the other two Maryland dioceses. Never once during the discussion did I hear any concern raised about the Church being able to hide behind the unjust provision that allows the Catholic Church to hide behind charitable immunity. Why? Because the charitable immunity provision, besides being outdated and archaic, was something no realized existed - no one realized that this provision was written into law. After hearing the debates in the General Assembly in 2023, it would be nearly impossible to believe that they were aware of the charitable immunity provision and that they knew the Catholic Church could hide behind it with impunity. It is obvious from the discussions that the legislative intent of the assembly was to allow ALL victims of child sexual abuse to seek justice for the terrible things done to them. They did not intend that the victims of abuse perpetrated by Catholic officials be excluded from the doors of justice and everyone else be allowed. That became even more apparent last year when the General assembly lowered the thresholds for all survivors. Why would the General assembly place a monetary cap in the CVA if they were aware that charitable immunity would effectively make that cap zero?

Most people are aware that the victims of Jeffrey Epstein are seeking justice. There are about 1000 victims and I think we can all agree that they certainly do deserve justice. I ask you – what about the thousandS (plural) of victims of the Catholic Church in Maryland alone. Do they not deserve the same justice?

I am strongly in favor of this bill but the fact is that I do not think it goes far enough. Most states have removed their charitable immunity provision or severely limited it. Maryland should do the same. Do we really believe that a license for being a charity is a license to freely perpetrate child abuse or any other serious crime? I think not.

I urge this committee to rule favorably on HB722 and wish to express my gratitude to Delegate Embry for sponsoring it.