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Testimony by
Michael C. Culhane
on H.B. 5473

"An Act Concerning Actions to Recover Damages for the
Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Assault of a Minor"
Before the Judiciary Committee
March 17, 2010

My name is Michael Culhane and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference. I am here this morning to oppose Raised Bill 5473 which would retroactively lift Connecticut's Statute of Limitations regarding childhood sexual abuse cases against Catholic – and other private and non-public – institutions.

Let me state from the onset that acts of childhood abuses must be regarded as a despicable crime as these acts are perpetrated against our most innocent and vulnerable citizens – the youth of our State and country. While one act against any child is "one act too many," we must acknowledge as a fact that no sector of our society has escaped this brutality.

The purpose of this bill is to protect all children, but it should be noted that children can be harmed – not only in Catholic and private institutions – but also in government settings. Children in one setting deserve the same protection as those in another setting and therefore, this bill must be "All in – All even". Let me tell you what I mean by that phrase.

Firstly, any legislation must be fair in treating all public and non-public institutions from the same prism. State statutes must be amended to waive sovereign immunity and the related notice and the limitation period for government entities.

Secondly, legislation must be fair and we all know, it is not fair to change the rules after "the game has been played." We therefore request that any changes be prospective and not have any retrospective effect.

And thirdly, any legislation must be preventive and promote the immediate removal of any perpetrators. This statutory element is absolutely essential because our prime focus regarding this issue must be the protection and safety of our children.