

Testimony to Judicial Committee on HB #5473 Statue of Limitations
March 17, 2010
Hartford, CT

My name is Beth McCabe from Canton, CT and I am a survivor of child sexual abuse. I am one of the survivors who did not remember being molested at age 12 in the early 1960's for 25 years. My perpetrator was a priest who my parents welcomed into our home.

Twenty five year later while helping a friend deal with abuse by a family member, I began to have flashbacks of my own abuse. My parents never suspected anything and it is still very difficult for them to deal with their anger and guilt that somehow they should have known. The criminal acts of this priest, has caused our family unspeakable pain. It took away my innocence, my dignity and my spiritual life.

In 2002 when the cover-up in the Catholic Church was reported I became enraged. The pain of the abuse was multiplied by the enormity of the abuse of power and the subsequent silence and cover-up by those in authority. I was enraged at the abuse not only caused by this one priest but by a church who preached about love and caring for children yet let so many accused priests be moved from one parish to another raping and molesting children.

There are many of us who did not have the memory, felt guilty or shame or didn't have the courage to speak about the abuse until well into our 30's, 40's, 50's, or 60's. Whether we remembered or not the trauma still affects our lives. Many suffer post traumatic stress disorder, addictions, failed relationship and lives that were once promising were shattered.

Since 2003 I have been a leader in SNAP Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests. I carry with me the stories of hundreds of victims, parents, siblings, husbands and wives who are all affected by these heinous crimes. What do you say to a mother telling me that her son age 30 had committed suicide a month ago because of the sexual abuse he suffered as a child or a sister who died of an overdose after years of struggling with the abused she suffered as a child. There are not words to console family members of their loss and the guilt they feel because somehow they "should have known".

The truth is pedophiles are not strangers; they are friends of the family, brothers, fathers, doctors, scout leaders, and priests. They are predators who charm our parents and groom victims into compliance and silence by abusing their power and control. They are the last people anyone would suspect.

The evidence is clear that many survivors cannot come to terms with their abuse until they are much older. Several states including Delaware, Maine and Alaska have recognized these facts by eliminating the statue of limitation for child sexual abuse in civil cases. The burden of proof is still on the victim.

One of the main opponents of bills to eliminate the statute of limitation across the country is the Catholic Church. They have said that eliminating the statute of limitations will bankrupt them or force them to cut services. I would bring your attention to the fact that out of the dioceses in the US that have filed for bankruptcy all have voluntarily withdrawn their applications. On the issue of reduced services, the church receives federal and state funds to provide many of these services.

As a taxpayer in Connecticut how many dollars are spent on services caused by child sexual abuse? Why shouldn't the perpetrator and those who sheltered him/her be held accountable.

I strongly advocate for Bill 5473 to eliminate the SOL for Child Sexual Abuse in Connecticut. As a victim/survivor of child sexual abuse, I have experienced the effects of the abuse for over 40 years. It took me 25 years to get the courage to name my abuser. Victims have suffered tremendously from an inability to heal and seek justice from crimes committed against them. I urge you to pass this bill and help victims seek the justice they deserve and help them in their healing journey.

Respectfully submitted:

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