

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I write in support of Committee Bill 3, Section 19. I currently live in Delaware and I am over the age of 48.

My name is Joan Lattin Carpenter and I attended St. Ann's School in the Black Rock section of Bridgeport. I was abused several times as a child by the principal of the school and a close friend of my family. His name was Fr. Francis McKenna. He and other priests were at my home often and to me this was normal.

- I was abused by Fr. McKenna on the church grounds in an old barn after helping him plant a garden. We went to the barn to put the garden tools away and that's where he started touching me in private parts. I was very scared. Walking home I didn't understand why he made me so angry and upset because all I did was help him plant a garden.
- Another time was in the rectory when he took my hand and was rubbing it on his penis. I kept telling him I had to go, but I wasn't strong enough to break his hold on me.
- Another time I was home by myself and the rest of the family went up the street for something at school and Fr. McKenna came over. He told me he was tired and told me to come and lay down with him. I told him that I wasn't tired, but he took my hand and brought me into my bedroom. There he raped me with my clothes on and I was used on his body like a sex toy! I tried to get away but he kept holding me against my will. I just wanted to get away and I couldn't!!! (At that time I knew nothing about sex or any passionate acts.) When I was freed from his grip, I remember running out of the room and standing in the kitchen with my hands in fists. I couldn't look at him when he came out of the bedroom, when he came out he said he had to go and left fast.
- I was too young to really know what he was doing and I never said a word. When you are that young I believe that God creates in each one of us, the knowledge of good and bad. I KNEW THAT WHAT HE DID WAS BAD, REALLY BAD, but I thought I was strong enough to handle it. I always remember my dad saying if you can't say anything nice about someone, don't say anything at all. In my child's mind I think that's one reason why I kept everything secret inside and never said anything.
- Another reason was my dad was very protective and loved his family very much and I thought if he ever knew what happened to me, he probably would have killed him and I didn't want trouble for my dad. That's why I prayed and prayed and thought I could just keep that secret to myself.
- Another reason why I never said anything was, I WAS ONLY A CHILD. Fr. McKenna was like a god and it seemed everybody in Black Rock knew him and loved him. And who would ever believe me. NO ONE!!!

I never reported a claim about this because I was too young, and didn't know anything about child abuse.

Times were very different when I was growing up compared to the days now. No one ever spoke about abuse, at least I never heard about it. I know this happened to me a long time ago and I'm so glad that so much of this, is now out in the open. My coming here today is to tell you that I wouldn't want anything like this to happen to any little girl or boy. I know victims that have committed suicide, turned to drugs and alcohol, and I really credit the close relationship and love that I have for our God that has carried me through this horrible experience.

This experience has taken a lot of my childhood away and it has affected my life as a child and still does today. Traits of anger, temper, trusting people and a very skeptical view on everything. I still cry about what has happened to me and still have restless nights especially when I hear about more and more child abuse.

I try hard to be thankful so I can rise above the horror, mistreatment and disappointments that I have experienced with Fr. McKenna and the total failure of the Catholic Church and I can't ask you anymore than what I have testified today regarding the cruelty of child abuse and HOPE you will believe me because it wasn't easy for me to express what had happened to me as a child and still haunts me.

I ask you to consider extending the statute of limitations to ease the problems of all the victims of abuse and hopefully this will threaten predators or at least make them realize their addition and seek help.

Thank You.

Joan Lattin Carpenter