



Foundation to Abolish Child Sex Abuse

Protecting Children | Restoring Hope

FACT SHEET: On the Fairness of HB 1947

Background: Currently in Pennsylvania, a survivor of childhood sex abuse has until age 50 to file criminal charges and age 30 to initiate a civil suit if the abuse occurred after 2002. Anyone abused before 2002 has much less time to report abuse. HB 1947 seeks to eliminate time barriers to file criminal and civil cases for those who were abused.

In the heated public debate on the passage of HB 1947, there have been charges that the bill is unfair and targets only religious institutions, specifically the Catholic Church. This is a self-serving misstatement.

Claim: HB 1947 only targets religious institutions.

Fact: This bill covers both private (secular and nonprofit) and public institutions going forward. Establishing a look-back period for public institutions appears to be in violation of current statutes. HB 1947 does as much as it legally can for survivors of child sex abuse and goes farther than any other measure to date in Pennsylvania.

Claim: HB 1947 is unfair to the Catholic Church.

Fact: This charge was leveled against the California 2003 window, and every court rejected it. No court has found SOL Reform to be targeted against any one entity in any state. HB 1947 will apply to a wide range of public and private institutions, both secular and religiously affiliated, and in no way discriminates against the Catholic Church. Organizations from day care centers to the YMCA to scouting troops will be equally affected. HB 1947 is a compromise solution for the vast majority victims, who have been shut out of justice; it does not afford justice to victims over the age of 50; that means many who were abused by Catholic priests and employees in Pennsylvania will not be able to sue.

Claim: HB 1947 will only affect a small number of survivors.

Fact: This reform will allow approximately 95 percent of the survivors of child sex abuse to come forward. The vast majority of survivors in Pennsylvania—75-90 percent—were abused by family members or acquaintances. This issue is far broader than just the Catholic Church. This bill will offer protection and justice to nearly all survivors.

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