



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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WCC COMMENTS ON PROPOSED REPEAL OF STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS

The Executive Director of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference, John Huebscher, offered the following comments regarding the proposed introduction of legislation to repeal the statute of limitations for civil suits against those who abuse children.

“Just four years ago, the legislature amended Wisconsin law to allow civil actions to be brought against alleged child abusers until the victim turns 35 years of age. The Wisconsin Catholic Conference supported that proposal. But in removing all time limits for future cases and in allowing for suits for abuse that occurred decades ago, this bill goes too far.”

Huebscher continued, “Statutes of limitations exist for good reason in our justice system. They secure the swift and accurate administration of justice and do so by insuring that prosecution and civil litigation occur in a timely manner. Statutes of limitations force the relevant parties to collect evidence and obtain witness testimony while both are still fresh and uncorrupted by time and/or undue influence. The proposal announced today sweeps that aside.”

“When the legislature considered this issue four years ago, then-Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager advised legislators that a proposal to revive claims after a statute of limitations has expired was constitutionally flawed. That advice is as valid today as it was then.”

“The Catholic Church is committed to assisting victims of abuse through the healing process, including access to a course of justice that will allow them to repair and rebuild their lives. To this end, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee has reached settlements with over 160 sexual abuse survivors whose claims were time barred and could not be resolved in court. That process remains open to any who wish to use it.”

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