



CHRIS TAYLOR

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ♦ 76th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

EMBARGOED UNTIL 11:45 a.m.
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Bills Provide Hope and Healing to Survivors of Child Abuse, while Strengthening Child Abuse Reporting Laws

Proposed Legislation would extend statute of limitations for child sexual abuse victims and require clergy to report child abuse and neglect

MADISON –Today, Senator Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee) and Representatives Chris Taylor (D-Madison) and Melissa Sargent (D-Madison) introduced two critical bills to help end the abuse of children known and perpetuated by clergy, while affording adult victims of childhood sexual abuse a long awaited chance at justice.

The Child Victims Act abolishes the civil statute of limitations for child sexual abuse cases, allowing victims to pursue civil action against their perpetrator after the age of 35 and allows any victim previously silenced to bring forward civil action within 3 years of the passage of this bill.

The Clergy Mandatory Reporter Act requires that clergy report instances of child abuse, including sexual abuse, and ends a loophole allowing child sexual abuse by clergy to remain secret and unreported. These bills will empower survivors to seek justice and healing, while helping to end the abuse of children.

The wide scale abuse of children by clergy has created public outrage throughout the world, including in Wisconsin. Stretching back decades, child victims in our own state suffered greatly as pedophile priests were not reported to authorities and simply moved to other parishes where they continued to abuse children. The Milwaukee Archdiocese's own files reveal how the systemic sexual abuse of children was covered up, ignored, and seldom reported to authorities until the early 2000s. Many adult survivors of priest sexual abuse of children have been denied justice in our court system. These bills seek to correct this tragic injustice, cast light on child abuse and neglect and provide additional protections for children.

Representative Taylor released the following statement:

“[Every 9 minutes](#), Child Protective Services agencies substantiate or find strong evidence indicating a child has been the victim of sexual abuse,” said cited Rep. Chris Taylor. “The abuse of children, including sexual abuse, is happening in communities and in congregations around the globe. Yet in Wisconsin, clergy are not mandatory reporters of most child abuse, unlike large categories of physicians and health care providers, school teachers and staff, counselors and social workers, to name a few. And members of the clergy do not have to report the sexual abuse of children, even by other clergy members, if they received evidence of this abuse through private, confidential communications. The Clergy Mandatory Reporter Act will end the secrecy the law currently provides in shielding perpetrators of child abuse, including by clergy. Keeping child abuse in the shadows just perpetuates its occurrence, and places more children at risk. It's time for all legislators to stand with the victims of child abuse, rather than defend archaic laws that shield perpetrators,” concluded Rep. Taylor.