

MARCH 11, 2024

DEAR JUDICIAL HOUSE COMMITTEE,

I AM WRITING IN REGARD TO HB 2300.

I AM A SURVIVOR OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE. MY ABUSER WAS A CATHOLIC PRIEST.

THE BILL WOULD MAKE IT MANDATORY FOR RELIGIOUS/CLERGY TO REPORT ABUSE. I SPENT SEVERAL WEEKS SITTING AT A TABLE IN THE STATE CAPITOL PROMOTING THIS BILL. WHILE SPEAKING TO THE MANY PEOPLE WHO CAME BY....MOST WERE ASTONISHED THAT THE CLERGY WERE EXEMPT FROM MANDATORY REPORTING OF ABUSE. I MUST SAY I WAS ASTONISHED THAT THE CLERGY WERE NOT MANDATED TO REPORT ABUSE.

A QUESTION THAT WAS ON MANY MINDS WAS WHAT THE CATHOLICS CALL "THE SEAL OF CONFESSION". WHEN THEY WERE ASSURED THAT THIS BILL WOULD NOT INFRINGE UPON THE PENITENT PRIVILEGE COMMUNICATION, THEY WERE RELIEVED AND SUPPORTED THIS BILL.

THIS BILL WOULD HELP RESTORE TRUST IN THE FAITH COMMUNITY, ALLOW ANOTHER TOOL FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE COURT SYSTEM, AND QUITE SIMPLY MAKE THE CLERGY ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN.

I AM CATHOLIC AND THE DIOCESE SUPPORTS THIS BILL.

THIS BILL REENFORCES THEIR MORAL RESPONSIBILITY WITH A LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY AS WELL. TO PUT IT SIMPLY..IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.

MICHAEL SANDRIDGE