

To Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I want to thank all of you and especially Chair Humphries for giving this a hearing.

My name is Joe Cheray, I am a sexual abuse survivor. My abuser was my grandfather who was the president of the altar guild of our church, a major financial contributor, usher and during the summer time helped with putting together the church picnic. He always made sure he had a relationship with whatever priest who was in residence in our church. The church I grew up in was Sacred Heart parish in Baileyville Kansas. My abuse started at the age of 10 and ended at the age of 15.

The sexual abuse consisted of fondling, vaginal penetration, oral sex, and at one time attempted sexual intercourse. He would even molest me in the pew during service. I would have to sit next to him in the pew during service. He would fold his arms and with the hand under his elbow he would fondle the side of my breasts when we were seated.

At the age of 15 I had had enough and it was time to get out. Things blew up in a severely dangerous way one Sunday afternoon while I was hanging clothes up on the line outside. He got angry after I told everyone in the house I didn't want anyone in my room anymore after finding things of mine in my brother's room. He ransacked my room. My curtains were torn off the wall, bed upended, dresser drawers emptied and the closet torn up. After I finished hanging clothes up I had to go in and clean up my room. He also called me a whore, bitch and slut. Later that day I took matters into my own hands and escaped to Seneca and demanded my high school counselor do her job as a mandatory reporter. I threatened to kill myself - go out in a body bag, or kill her and her husband and go to juvenile detention. Extreme conditions called for extreme actions that day.

I tried going to our priest a few times during that time and nothing happened. Why should it? He wasn't a mandated reporter of abuse in the state of Kansas at the time. Had I known this I wouldn't have gone to him, but I didn't know this. Had I known this I would have gone to DCF. Later after I got out and was in a foster home I called him and he said I should go home and pray that things get better.

Kansas is one of ten states and territories in the United States that clergy are not listed as mandatory reporters of abuse. Neighboring states around us all have some statute for clergy with respect to mandatory reporting. The DCF website lists 13 professions that are mandated to report abuse. Clergy are absent from this list.

It's too late for me to have been able to benefit from the help this legislation would have afforded me at the time of my abuse, but it's not too late for others going forward. I urge everyone on this committee to please pass this favorably out of committee. Help current and future victims of abuse have one more safety net in place to help them escape their abuse.

Thank you for listening. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.