

HOUSE BILL 5909 - April 29, 2025

Ladies and gentlemen,

At age eleven I was abused for one year by Father Robert Marcantonio, in Cranston RI.

I stand here today to demand a change—a change that can no longer wait. The statute of limitations on child abuse cases in Rhode Island is not just a legal technicality; it is a shield for abusers and a gag for survivors. It is time to shatter that silence.

Child abuse is not just an act of violence—it is a theft of innocence, a wound that cuts to the soul. And those wounds don't heal on a schedule. Survivors live with their pain, their fear, their shame, often in silence, for years, sometimes lifetimes. **Trauma doesn't recognize deadlines. Healing doesn't follow a timetable. And justice should never expire.**

Right now, our laws are telling survivors that their pain has an expiration date. This is unacceptable. By limiting their access to justice, we are failing them. We are failing to hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes. And we are failing to protect our community from future harm.

This must end today. By extending—or better yet, eliminating—the statute of limitations for child abuse cases, we are sending a powerful message: that we value the courage it takes for survivors to step forward, that we believe their stories, and that we will not let them be silenced any longer.

This is not just about justice for the past; it is about hope for the future. When we hold abusers accountable, we are not just protecting survivors—we are protecting the children of tomorrow. We are building a society where no predator can hide behind the law, and no survivor has to suffer in silence.

Rhode Island has the chance to finally catch up with countless other states and stand as a beacon of justice and compassion. To tell survivors: “We see you. We hear you. And we are fighting for you.” Let us not look back and wonder why we waited so long. Let us act today, with courage and conviction, to make this change.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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