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Testimony in Favor of H 7200

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Thank you Chairwoman McEntee and members of the committee.

You've all heard our stories. You've heard the stories of Boy Scout victims, of high school victims and more. Many times! Last year you were convinced enough to pass this new version of Annie's law. I thank you from the bottom of my heart! Unfortunately the Senate was not equally convinced.

With the release of the AG's scathing report last week the evidence should be dramatically more compelling. If you read closely you will realize that the Providence Diocese lied to us about the priests they protect as recently as 2022. That is yesterday! Not ancient history. They lied to protect their wealth, to keep parishioners in the dark, and to keep the contributions flowing.

My Parish, Sacred Heart, was the home to 6 pedophile priests according to the AG's report. There were 2 there when I was born - the deck was already stacked against me. The man who married my parents and was pastor there for 4 decades, Msgr Anthony DeAngelis, sexually abused me for 8 years, beginning in kindergarten.

One of the other known Sacred Heart pedophiles was Fr Turillo. He was in and out of Sacred Heart over the years, pastor for 15 years. He married my brother and sister-in-law, and was a family friend. In 2016 we learned, to our horror, that he was being accused of raping a boy. The Diocese professed to be "doing the right thing" by immediately removing him from ministry and reporting this one accusation to the state police. Turillo was 95.

What the Diocese never told the public in 2016, and I only learned reading this report, was that they knew he was a pedophile for more than 6 decades! There were several previous accusations in his early years at Sacred Heart, and several after he was moved, reported to the Diocese at the times they happened. Who knows how many more?

This was the pastor I trusted with the explicit details of my abuse when I first came forward. I was sent there at the request of Robert McCarthy from the Diocese. McCarthy knew I was reporting my story to another pedophile! I went to that rectory in a

state of high anxiety to tell my awful secret with my dear mother. She cried during that meeting, then got angry, but she was so brave for me! As a mother, I understand what courage that takes. We trusted him.

I suspect many of you will find evidence of broken trust in this report. I believe most RI Catholics know at least one name on the AG's list.

Anyone who reads the AG's report or even the news coverage of it, Catholics and non-Catholics alike should be Shocked and Enraged! It recounts 70+ years of men's cruelty to innocent children. The diocese not only passively forgave abusers and passed them around, they actively protected criminally convicted Rapist Priests from Jail time. They used their influence with prosecutors and judges to obtain ridiculously lenient sentences.

For at least 75 years the Providence Diocese trafficked children to be raped by their employees. But instead of moving the children they moved the perpetrators, from parish to parish and back again. The result was the same.

Over the years I have been appalled by the power that the Diocese' lobbyists have had in these halls of our State Capital. The Diocese aggressively lobbies House and Senate leadership as if the Church deserves a seat at the table in deciding it's own fate. Imagine for a moment how you would react if instead of Fr Healey, the infamous Jeffery Epstein had access to legislative leadership whenever a bill came up that might negatively affect his criminal organization? Would it be tolerated in 2026? Would it be "business as usual"?

If your answer is "yes", then my faith in this legislative body to do the right thing is crushed.

If your answer is "No, it wouldn't be tolerated". Then you must turn your back on the arguments about this bill financially ruining the church, or overloading the courts. The victims who have not yet come forward need your support. The children who have not yet been raped by trusted elders and clergymen need your protection. This law will do that.

To the senate if you are listening:

It's time to stand up and be on the right side of history. I am 100% sure your constituents want to keep their children safe. Only accountability through a law like this will make that happen. Politics cannot override the protection of children.

