



pennsylvania

OFFICE OF VICTIM ADVOCATE

Giving Crime Victims a Voice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 1, 2021

Survivor Impact of Statute of Limitations Mishandling

Harrisburg, PA – In Pennsylvania, there are lengthy – and necessary – balances in place when an amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution is proposed. The change must pass two consecutive legislative sessions, be publicly advertised by the Department of State at each passage, and then must be supported by citizens via a ballot vote.

For decades, survivors and advocates have pushed for reforms on the state's statute of limitations for sexual abuse. In 2018, the need for reform was underscored by the release of 40th Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report on the Catholic Archdiocese. Last year, the General Assembly passed reform aimed at eliminating the statute of limitations, prospectively, for child victims. This was a tremendous improvement, although it continued to leave out adult victims and failed to address the one-time, two-year window to justice that survivors have been seeking.

To bolster the prospective change for child victims, the General Assembly voted to support a constitutional amendment to open a one-time window for victims under the age of 18 who are still unable access the court system retroactively. The measure was set to appear on a spring ballot for voters.

The Office of Victim Advocate has learned that, due to a mistake at the Department of State, this amendment will not appear on the ballot and the previous legislative passages are now invalid.

There is clear evidence that the statute of limitations silences victims and, furthermore, that institutions have knowingly and intentionally waited for the statute to lapse in their favor. It is time to shift our focus to supporting victims - of all ages - and pass measures that allow survivors to access the justice system when they feel safe and ready.

This additional victimization to survivors is unconscionable. The Office of Victim Advocate fully supports measures that abolish all time constraints on survivors and encourages swift passage of a renewed window to justice, allowing time-barred victims to bring forth claims and expose predators within our communities. The Office of Victim Advocate stands in solidarity with CHILD USA and the United Front for PA SOL Reform on this important issue.

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Pennie Hockenberry, Acting Commonwealth Victim Advocate, pehockenbe@pa.gov
Ashley Walkowiak, anwalkowiak@pa.gov, 717.773.2399

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