

Legislation Would End Church Secrecy In Sex Abuse Reporting

Written by Peter Isely, Founding Member, SNAP
Friday, 20 December 2019 17:06 -



Clergy are currently the only profession in Wisconsin exempt from reporting.

MILWAUKEE - New church law announced by Pope Francis this week abolishes “pontifical secrecy” in sex abuse cases -- it's time to do the same in Wisconsin. The proposed legislation would require Wisconsin clergy of all faiths to report child abuse and neglect. Right now, Clergy are the only profession in Wisconsin exempt from reporting. The bills would also bring badly needed reform to state's archaic civil statute on child sex abuse.

A meeting was held in Milwaukee to explain the legislation:

WHAT

Wisconsin Senator Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee) and Representative Chris Taylor (D-Madison) will be joined by Milwaukee District Attorney John Chisholm, Fr. James Connell (former Vice-Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee), and the Founder of SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) to urge public support for two new Wisconsin child protection bills.

WHEN

THURSDAY, December 19 at 11:00 a.m.

WHERE

Northcott Neighborhood House, 2460 N. 6th Street, Milwaukee

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WHY

This week, as Pope Francis announced a new church law abolishing church secrecy on child sex abuse cases, state lawmakers who are leading advocates for children's rights will discuss and urge passage of reform legislation that would significantly eliminate secrecy and cover up of child sex crimes in Wisconsin.

The Clergy Mandated Reporting Act would require clergy be placed with thirty other Wisconsin professions to report child sex abuse when discovered in the course of their professional duties. In 2002 a special "exemption" was added to the state reporting law that allows clergy to keep known and suspected child abuse "secret". The new bill eliminates this secrecy exemption. (<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2019/related/proposals/ab423.pdf>)

The Child Victims Act (CVA) would eliminate the civil statute on child sex abuse and allow victims in Wisconsin to file cases against their perpetrators and any officials in both secular and religious organizations who covered up the abuse. Under current Wisconsin law, religious organizations are exempt from negligence claims for covering up or concealing child sex crimes. (<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2019/related/proposals/ab424.pdf>)

The two bills would provide protection for children and support victims' rights in a fair and uniform manner across all state organizations, secular and religious.

CONTACT

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(SNAP, the Survivors Network has been providing support for victims of sexual abuse in institutional settings for 30 years. We have more than 25,000 survivors and supporters in our network. Our website is SNAPnetwork.org)