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February 12, 2013

Honorable Andrew Cuomo
Governor. State of New York
New York State Capitol
Albany, New York 12248

Dear Governor Cuomo:

It was disappointing not to hear you address the ongoing crisis about childhood sexual abuse in your State of the State message last month and I wanted to reach out to you with the voices represented by thousands of New York State residents who hope you will act on the subject in 2013.

During a year in which the issue was raised in so many different sectors of our society, from colleges and churches, to youth groups, schools and amateur sports, even you joined the discussion about the need for improved requirements for mandatory reporting of child sex abuse in scholastic sports. During 2012 we saw revelations about historic patterns of abuse that helped us understand the reality behind the startling statistic that one in five children are victims of child sexual abuse before they turn 18.

Over the past eight years, my colleagues in the Assembly and I have voted four times to reform the archaic statute of limitations that prevented victims of abuse from getting justice and protected pedophiles and the organizations and institutions that hide their crimes. We had hoped to have your support for this legislation, the Child Victims Act of New York --- and we still do.

The current impetus for this reform began in 2009 when supporters of the bill launched an on-line petition (nearly 7,000 names enclosed here) to urge the then-Governor and Legislative leaders to enact the Child Victims Act. Action at that time was short-circuited by political turmoil in the State Senate. Also

enclosed are the on-line signatures of 1000 additional New Yorkers who sent messages directly to you last year asking you to act on behalf of past and future victims of childhood sexual abuse.

There is compelling evidence that New York should act to reform its archaic statutes regarding child sex abuse crimes and my bill, the Child Victims Act (A1771) will do that, appropriately protecting future generations of children by identifying known predators and providing justice for past victims.

Over the past year alone, cases involving Penn State and Syracuse Universities, the Boy Scouts, the Diocese of Philadelphia, the BBC, Poly Prep Day School, Horace Mann School, and Yeshiva University High School not only demonstrate that the current law is not just woefully inadequate but that justice requires more than a modest extension of the statute of limitations.

That is why my bill in the new session of the Legislature will seek to completely eliminate the criminal and civil statute of limitations for these crimes. As with previous legislation adopted by the Assembly, this new bill also includes a one-year "window" that completely suspends the civil statute of limitations for old crimes in order to make it possible for older victims in these cases to get a measure of justice.

There is no limit on what is so often a life-time of suffering and anguish for victims of child sex abuse; likewise, there must be no limit on the ability of victims and society to prosecute abusers and to hold accountable the institutions and organizations who protect and hide them making it possible for them to continue to prey on new victims.

I respectfully ask you to agree to sign the Child Victims Act legislation when it comes to your desk and work with me to secure its passage.

Sincerely,



Margaret M. Markey
Member of Assembly

Attachments:

2009-10 Petitions to Governor and Legislative Leaders
2012 Petition to Governor Cuomo and Legislative Leaders