

NYS TO PASS CHILD VICTIMS ACT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on New York State's Child Victims Act, which is expected to pass today:

The Catholic League has been fighting the Child Victims Act for many years, primarily because it discriminates against Catholics. Most of these bills, which suspend the statute of limitations for offenses involving the sexual abuse of minors, have never applied to the public sector, thus letting the public schools off the hook. But due in part to our efforts, public and private institutions will now be treated equally.

On April 1, 2016, I criticized New York State Senator Brad Hoylman for sponsoring a bill that would exclude public institutions from legislation eliminating the statute of limitations for these crimes. I was happy to note that he got the message and quickly pivoted. Ten days later I commended him for doing so. The bill failed, as did another version in 2017.

On May 11, 2018, I had a phone conversation with Senator Hoylman saying that Catholic lawmakers were not convinced that the language of the most recent iteration would cover public schools retrospectively. He insisted that the "lookback" provision applied to the public sector. On June 6, he assured Rick Hinshaw, our director of communications, that we had his word that all institutions would be treated equally.

Just this month there were new questions regarding this issue. Would the "lookback" provision—allowing a one-year window for old allegations of abuse to be filed—apply to the public schools? As is often the case with these bills, the language lacked clarity, allowing for different interpretations. Gov. Andrew Cuomo and lawmakers added some new language that made it clear that the public schools would be covered by the Child Victims Act.

The New York Attorney General, Letitia James, has posted on her website a “Catholic Clergy Abuse” hotline. This is a classic example of religious profiling. Is she not aware of sexual abuse involving minors committed by the clergy of other religions?

What if an Attorney General in some other state were to have an “African-American Drug Abuse” hotline reporting incidents of illegal drug use among blacks, and blacks only? Would not James, an African American, go berserk?

Now that the public schools are covered, we need a “Sexual Abuse” hotline, one that is inclusive of all institutions.

Contact Ibrahim Khan, NY Attorney General Chief of Staff: ibrahim.khan@ag.ny.gov