

Good morning and thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak. My name is Jennifer Goetz. At age 8 or 9 in 1984-85, I was sexually assaulted by a serial pedophile, pediatrician Dr. Jack Barto. I went to the medical practice he worked at for a follow up visit after having strep throat. Barto told my mother that he needed to check me in case I had a vaginal yeast infection since I had been on antibiotics. He convinced my mother to leave the examining room so I would not be embarrassed. Back then you didn't question people of authority. He was a doctor, my mother trusted him, so she left the room. I can remember laying on the examining table that was pushed up against the wall to my left (use hands for affect), and Barto standing on the right side of the table with me trapped in the middle. He proceeded to shove his ungloved, unlubricated fingers into my vagina. I cried out from the pain. I remember staring at the door in front of me desperately wanting to get out of that room and away from him. Praying he would stop hurting me. When he was done, I left the room and met my mother out in the hallway. Still crying from the pain, I told her "he hurt me".

In 1998 three families came forward saying that their children had been sexually assaulted by Barto. Instead of supporting these children, I watched in horror as my town rallied around the "good" doctor. They actually passed out ribbons of support at football games. Some of his victims were forced to wear those ribbons. My town made it loud and clear who they believed, so I stayed silent.

In 2018 Barto was arrested for sexually assaulting a 12 year old girl during an office visit. That girl and her family had enough courage to come forward to police and report it. I decided that I needed to come forward and talk to the police, knowing that I was probably too late for him to be charged with my assault, but wanting to give credibility to this brave girl. Before that day in January 2018, only 2 people knew what he had done to me – my mother and my fiancé. It took me 33 years to come forward.

I am now 43 years old. From the outside I look like everyone else. I am a health care professional, I've been married to the same man for almost 20 years and we have a beautiful daughter. From the inside I am damaged and have been ever since the day I was sexually assaulted by my doctor.

- I had a very lonely and sad childhood. I didn't really have any friends at all.

- I suffered with low self-esteem. I felt dirty and ashamed of what had happened to me.
- I suffered with severe depression where I used to cry in the shower so no one would know how I was really feeling.
- I currently suffer from anxiety and panic attacks.
- Some mornings I wake up drenched in sweat in a full blown panic attack because of the nightmares I had.

I was in the courtroom for Barto's sentencing. I got to listen as one by one brave survivors were allowed to give their victim impact statements and address Barto to his face. I was not afforded that opportunity because I was not a charged victim. He was sentenced to a max of 158 years in prison. While I am glad he is in prison unable to harm anymore children, there was no justice for me and the many others who had timed out due to Pennsylvania's antiquated laws. The Attorney General's office had to do complicated math to figure out that I timed out at age 15. In order for Barto to have been charged with my sexual assault, I had to come forward while I was still 14 years old – still a child.

Barto admitted during his sexual offender assessment that he went into pediatrics so he would have access to children. He admitted that he first started abusing his young patients when he got his medical license. I am just one of many of his survivors. Just two days before he was arrested in January 2018, he sexually assaulted 3 children (that we know of). 3 children, 1 day, 44 years as a pediatrician. I did some math. If we give him 4 weeks off for vacation every year and if he only worked 4 days a week, there is the potential that he could have committed over 25,000 sexual assaults on children while he was a licensed pediatrician.

Studies have shown that the average age a child sexual assault survivor comes forward is 52 (if they ever come forward). That is past the current age given in our criminal laws and past the age given in our civil laws. These laws need to be changed. There should be no random number or age attached to this type of crime. Survivors should be able to come forward when they feel they are ready and able to do so, and not have justice denied to them due to a random number or age that was picked and put into law.

Barto like so many others including Sandusky and Nassar, used their power of authority and reputation in the community to keep victims silent. Who is going to believe the word of a child against the “good” doctor, or the “good” football coach? In my case Barto was the “good” doctor, who sang in his church choir, volunteered to coach sports teams, and was a member of the school board. My town bought that image he portrayed and dismissed victims as nobodies.

There needs to be a retroactive window to allow survivors the opportunity for civil justice. As survivors, we were silenced by our communities who would not believe us even if we came forward. Opening a window does not guarantee a predator or institution will be held liable, there still is a burden of proof that has to be met.

I have heard some say, “it’s unconstitutional to open a window”. As legislatures your job is to pass laws. Period. Let the courts decide if it is unconstitutional.

I have heard some say, “there is no need for a window, there is a compensation fund”. Catholic clergy survivors make up about 4% of all Pennsylvania child sexual assault survivors. That means 96% of us who were sexually assaulted/abused by teachers, doctors, coaches, family or friends don’t even have that as an option.

I have heard some say, “only the predator should be held accountable for their crime and not the institution to which they belonged”. Institutions need to be held accountable as well. Just like in the Sandusky case or the Nassar case, people in those institutions knew what was going on and chose to do nothing to stop it. In my case, numerous families throughout the decades came forward and told Dr. Barto’s practice what he had done to their children. They chose to do nothing to stop him, in essence gifting him victims everyday they let him continue to work there.

A great friend of mine and fellow survivor once described our lives as survivors as being a 1000 piece puzzle. We are working so hard to put the pieces together only to discover that 1 piece is missing -justice. You as legislatures have the power to give us that missing piece back so we can complete our puzzle. I urge you to pass the new statute of limitations and open a window for all survivors. Other states have done so, so can you.

1 in 9 girls and 1 in 53 boys will be sexually assaulted by the time they are 18. That means somewhere in your circle of family, friends, neighbors, even the people you walk past in these halls, you have encountered a survivor of child sexual assault.

It takes courage to come here as a survivor and talk to you today, and it will take courage on your part to stand up and do the right thing and pass these laws and a window in the face of resistance from the leadership putting pressure on you not to do so. Please have that courage and do what is right.

Thank you