

“I will never get caught”-these words I hear over and over in my head. The words my abuser said with a smirk on his face. So far in Pennsylvania that monster is 100% correct. I’ve been speaking out about SOL Reform for years. Coming to Harrisburg and speaking in the face of fear for our legislatures to do the right thing- I am exhausted. I’m disgusted and in utter disbelief watching our system fail those who have been repeatedly wronged in Pennsylvania.

My abuser has 40 years of documented abuse, protected by one of the richest institutions in the world. He has continuously been moved, sent away, and then placed right back in a protected environment. After stepping away from the priesthood, this man continued to abuse, and has been protected by other institutions for fear that they would receive a bad reputation. He has also been protected by our weak laws in Pennsylvania. These laws protect predators and by their existence encourages an offender to intimidate their victims to silence. This predator walks freely in my city every day.

I came forward at the age of 32 because I read that he abused another girl at my high school. I thought I was the only one up until that point. To my surprise, slowly, I started to realize over time how many victims this man had offended. I was abused in an institution that taught me that this man was the closest thing next to God. This same institution also taught me I was the evil one and the sinner because of my sexual orientation. Alone in the world, nowhere else to turn, I went to the confessional to admit my sin. From that very moment, my abuse began and continued until I left for college that summer, ready to move on with my life. I stuffed everything down deep and turned to alcohol to numb and escape the shame and guilt. I got through my life, barely, slowly dying on the inside, until I got help at the age of 32.

It is at this point that my story turns from victim to survivor, doing what I can do to stand up and speak for what is right. It amazes me after the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report release, that so many states are doing the right thing, except Pennsylvania. The recommendations laid out by the Grand Jury seem to have been put on the back burner. I am so tired of traveling to Harrisburg and witnessing only coming close to getting the job done. I watch time and time again as our senators and representatives DO NOT DO THE RIGHT THING!

Is it weakness? Is it peer pressure? Is it fear?

Stand up in the face of fear and DO THE RIGHT THING. We need a window! Our predators have been protected for years and continue to be protected largely in part by the Catholic Church.

I continue to stand up whenever and wherever I am asked-**IN THE FACE OF FEAR**. I walk around my city every day not knowing if I will bump into my abuser and I am scared but do it anyway. I challenge our politicians to stand up in the face of fear and do the right thing.

Now for my opinion on the bills. I’ve been suiting up and showing up in Harrisburg for many years, speaking out and standing up for justice for ALL victims. It wasn’t until the release of the Grand Jury report that I started to really look into my individual situation. My abuse occurred at ages 17-18. I put my trust in my abuser because I had no one to turn to. He groomed me for

months and when I turned 18, a few months later he sexually assaulted me. Was the Mary at 17 different from the Mary at 18? To me - the answer is no. I was still young and naïve and deathly afraid my abuser would spill my secret. To the courts the answer would be yes. How is that right?

I'm so grateful we have experts in the field to untangle these bills. Just when I think I understand it all, something said complicates what I thought I knew. One thing I do know is that Senate Bill 540 makes the most sense. It includes all of the issues we have been fighting for over the years. Most importantly, it includes the window, which is a must. It allows for justice against those predators that have been protected for years. It also gives survivors the hope of action NOW, not years from now.

I am grateful for all of those legislatures past and present for standing up and doing the right thing. Since 2018 release of the Grand Jury report, my message has been clear. To voice the importance of following the four recommendations of that report. Senate Bill 540 supports all of the recommendations.

Nothing much has changed in my 10+ years of coming to Harrisburg. One thing that has is I was once part of a small representation of clergy abuse victims and now am part of a large army of survivors who are all not afraid to do the right thing. I am proud to know and love these warriors and I can tell you this – we aren't going anywhere! I am honored to be asked to speak today. I ask that the legislatures stand up, look fear in the face, and do the right thing. Enough is enough!