

# Maryland Senate committee rejects statute of limitations bill

The Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee soundly rejected a bill Feb. 12 that would have significantly extended the time period when child sexual abuse victims can file civil lawsuits in Maryland.

Committee members defeated Baltimore County Sen. Delores Kelley's Bill 238, 8-2.

The Democrat's bill would have extended the age when child sexual abuse victims could file for civil damages from age 25 to 50. It would have also created a two-year window allowing retroactive lawsuits that are barred by existing law.

Catholic leaders vigorously opposed the bill, arguing that it unfairly targeted the church and would have had a "devastating" financial impact on the church's many educational and charitable outreach efforts.

"We are very pleased that the committee, once again in its wisdom, recognized that this is a piece of bad legislation," said Mary Ellen Russell, executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference.

"We hope in the future, we can turn our attention to promoting and supporting continued efforts that use the models the church has developed for protecting children and for ensuring that even the possibility of abuse is detected early and reported immediately," she said.

Ms. Russell believed the bill did nothing to protect children and would have discouraged prompt reporting of child sexual abuse.

Although a companion bill has been introduced in the House of Delegates, Ms. Russell believes it will fail as the Senate version did.

"Our hope is that it's the end of this," she said. "It's clear where the Legislature stands on this issue and that they recognize that it's a piece of bad law."

Mary Sullivan, MCC communications director, noted that Catholics sent more than

1,000 e-mails to lawmakers through the conference's legislative advocacy network.

Ms. Russell said concerned Catholics helped sway legislators against the bill by flooding their offices with e-mails, visits and phone calls.

"We're very happy to say," Ms. Russell added, "that the voice of Catholic constituents was heard."

***The following committee members voted against SB 238:***

Sen. Brian E. Frosh (D, Montgomery County)

Sen. Lisa A. Gladden (D, Baltimore City)

Sen. Larry E. Haines (R, Baltimore and Carroll Counties)

Sen. Nancy Jacobs (R, Carroll and Cecil Counties)

Sen. Alex X. Mooney (R, Frederick County)

Sen. C. Anthony Muse (D, Prince George's County)

Sen. Jamie Raskin (D, Montgomery County)

Sen. Bryan W. Simonaire (R, Anne Arundel County)

***The following committee members voted for SB 238:***

Sen. James Brochin (D, Baltimore County)

Sen. Jennie M. Forehand (D, Montgomery County)