



Written Testimony of

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**At ENOUGH ABUSE**

Hearing on HB 3582  
Before the Committee on Rules  
of the Oregon House

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## **Testimony in Support of Oregon HB 3582: Eliminating the Statute of Limitations for Childhood Sexual Abuse Actions**

Good morning, esteemed members of the committee. I am Kathryn Robb, National Director of the Children's Justice Campaign at Enough Abuse. As a lawyer, legislative advocate, national expert, and survivor of childhood sexual abuse, I am submitting this testimony to express our organization's strong support for Oregon HB 3582.

This legislation addresses a critical need to protect children in our communities and ensure justice for survivors of childhood sexual abuse ("CSA"). By eliminating the statutes of limitation ("SOLs") for civil actions, HB 3582 empowers survivors to seek accountability and creates a safer environment for children today.

### **How This Legislation Benefits the Common Good**

*A statute of limitation* is a law that sets a time limit for filing a lawsuit; they are arbitrary time limits established by legislative bodies. They make sense for most civil wrongs; however, they are not appropriate for sexual abuse claims where the young victim is silenced by the perpetrator, often for decades after the victim reaches the age of majority. Statutes of limitations for child sexual abuse claims do not serve the well-being of our children or the common good. These limits can be deeply unfair to survivors of child sexual abuse, as the trauma they experience often delays their ability to come forward. Once the SOL has passed, a person can no longer sue, regardless of the merits of their claim, effectively silencing survivors and allowing abusers to escape accountability. Eliminating the statute of limitations for child sexual abuse cases provides the following significant benefits to society:

- 1. Protects Kids Now:** By identifying hidden predators and bad actors, we can prevent future abuse.
- 2. Transfers the Cost of Abuse:** It shifts the financial burden from victims and taxpayers to the responsible parties.



- 3. **Educates Communities:** It raises awareness about the extent child sexual abuse, empowering communities to better protect children.
- 4. **Prevents Future Abuse:** By forcing institutions to adopt safer child protection policies, procedures, training, and responses, we can create a safer environment for all children.

## Childhood Sexual Abuse is Widespread

Childhood sexual abuse is not a rare occurrence; it is a crisis in our communities that demands immediate attention. Approximately **1 in 8 children will experience sexual abuse before their 18th birthday**.<sup>1</sup> These are not just numbers; they are real children, our children, whose lives are forever altered by this trauma.<sup>2</sup>



## The Long-Term Impacts of Abuse

The effects of childhood sexual abuse are severe and long-lasting, impacting survivors physically, psychologically, and socially. Studies have revealed statistically significant correlations between CSA and various **medical issues**, including gynecological problems, chronic pain, sleeping disorders, and obesity. The **sexual health** of survivors is also compromised, with increased risks of adult sexual revictimization, adolescent pregnancy, and higher rates of HIV positivity among men who have sex with men. Furthermore, the **psychological** toll is profound, with survivors reporting higher levels of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation and behavior, suicide attempts, eating disorders, non-epileptic seizures, fear, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).<sup>3</sup> These

<sup>1</sup> Center for Violence Prevention Research, (2024, Nov. 15). "Literature review on prevention of child sexual abuse", [www.scienceofviolence.org](http://www.scienceofviolence.org).

<sup>2</sup> Stoltenborgh, Marije et al. "A global perspective on child sexual abuse: meta-analysis of prevalence around the world." Child maltreatment vol. 16,2 (2011): 79-101. doi:10.1177/1077559511403920.

<sup>3</sup> Nagtegaal, Maria H, and Cyril Boonmann. "Child Sexual Abuse and Problems Reported by Survivors of CSA: A Meta-Review." Journal of child sexual abuse vol. 31,2 (2022): 147-176. doi:10.1080/10538712.2021.1985673.



devastating impacts underscore the urgent need to address the trauma of CSA and provide avenues for healing and justice.

## Why Survivors Stay Silent

The trauma associated with childhood sexual abuse creates significant barriers to reporting. Tragically, studies show that around 44.9% of male child sex abuse victims and 25.4% of female CSA victims who eventually **disclose their abuse** do so **more than twenty years after** it occurred.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it is estimated that a staggering 70–95% of child sexual abuse victims never report their abuse to the police.<sup>5</sup> This silence is not a reflection of a lack of courage or evidence but rather the profound psychological impact of abuse, including the deep-seated fear, shame, and manipulation tactics employed by perpetrators and their enablers. Oregon's current statute of limitations fails to account for these very real obstacles, effectively silencing survivors and shielding perpetrators from accountability. It perpetuates a system where justice is often unattainable for those who need it most.

## Justice Through Eliminating SOLs

By eliminating the statute of limitations, HB 3582 empowers survivors of childhood sexual abuse to come forward when they are ready, on their own terms, regardless of how much time has passed. This reform ensures that decades after the abuse, survivors retain the right to tell their stories, name their abusers, and expose patterns of abuse that may still be unfolding. The knowledge that past actions can be brought to light and result in liability, even years later, challenges the sense of impunity that enables some offenders to continue their destructive behavior. This critical change enables the pursuit of justice, holds offenders accountable, and helps prevent further harm to children.

## Oregon Should Join the National Movement

Across the United States, there is a growing movement to eliminate statutes of limitations for childhood sexual abuse cases and open permanent revival windows for previously time-barred claims. Oregon's current SOL law allows survivors of childhood sexual abuse to file civil claims until age 40, which still leaves many survivors without access to justice. HB 3582 would bring Oregon more in line with the majority of states that have enacted these protections, specifically by:

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<sup>4</sup> O'Leary, Patrick J, and James Barber. "Gender differences in silencing following childhood sexual abuse." *Journal of child sexual abuse* vol. 17,2 (2008): 133-43. doi:10.1080/10538710801916416.

<sup>5</sup> Finkelhor, David, et al. "Sexually Assaulted Children: National Estimates and Characteristics." *National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children*, Office of Justice Programs, Aug. 2008, [www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/214383.pdf](http://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/214383.pdf).



- **Eliminating SOLs:** Nineteen states, two territories, and the federal government have eliminated civil SOLs for some or all CSA claims. For example, the Federal Government recognized the importance of addressing this issue with The Eliminating Limits to Justice for Child Sex Abuse Victims Act of 2022, which removed the civil SOL for federal CSA claims.
- **Enacting Revival Windows:** Thirty states and three territories have passed revival/window laws for expired civil CSA claims, including states like Arkansas, Louisiana, Maryland, and Vermont, demonstrating the broad appeal of revival legislation for CSA claims. Oregon is among the states with a revival law, allowing survivors to bring claims until age 40, even if those claims were previously time-barred. However, this age cap still prevents many survivors from seeking justice.

**19 states, 2 territories,  
and the federal gov.  
have eliminated the civil  
SOL for some or all CSA  
claims**

AR, AK, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, IL,  
LA, ME, MD, MN, NE, NV, NH, UT, VT,  
WA, Fed., NMI, & Guam

**22**  
JURISDICTIONS

**30 states and 3  
territories have  
revival/window  
legislation for expired  
civil CSA claims**

AL, AZ, AR, CA, CO\*, CT, DE, GA, HI, IN, IA, KS,  
KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MT, NV, NJ, NY,  
NC, OH, OR, RI, UT\*, VT, WV, DC, NMI, & Guam

**33**  
JURISDICTIONS

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I urge this committee to support HB 3582. By passing this bill, Oregon can help survivors of child sexual abuse heal by removing legal barriers and time constraints that silence them, and by holding sexual predators and other bad actors accountable. This legislation acknowledges the realities of delayed disclosure and the long-term impacts of CSA, fostering an environment where survivors can heal and hold perpetrators accountable. Critically, HB 3582 sends a strong message to would-be offenders that they will be held accountable, contributing to a safer environment for children today and preventing future abuse. Let us prioritize the well-being of survivors, take a step toward breaking the cycle of trauma, and protect our children now and in the future.



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