

# CHURCH INFLUENCING STATE: How the Catholic Church Spent Millions Against Survivors of Clergy Abuse

June 2019

## CHURCH LOBBYING TOTALED MORE THAN \$10.6 MILLION IN THE NORTHEAST ALONE, FOCUSED ON FIGHTING BILLS TO EXTEND OR WAIVE STATUTES OF LIMITATIONS

"The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain, and so it is urgent that we once more reaffirm our commitment to ensure the protection of minors and of vulnerable adults."  
- Pope Francis, August 20, 2018<sup>i</sup>

The Catholic Church has spent more than \$10,602,000 on lobbying in eight Northeastern U.S. states since 2011, with a considerable amount aimed at thwarting legislation that would extend the statutes of limitations for survivors of clergy sexual abuse. The Church's lobbying activities stand in stark contrast to its public statements about providing healing and closure to survivors.

### CATHOLIC CHURCH'S LOBBYING BY STATE, 2011-2018<sup>ii</sup>

| State         | Amount              | Status of Legislation (as of 6/3/19) <sup>iii</sup>  |
|---------------|---------------------|--|
| Pennsylvania  | \$5,322,979         | HB 962 and 963 passed the House on April 10, 2019 and are awaiting Senate action. SB 540 was introduced in Senate and referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee April 10, 2019.                                   |
| New York      | \$2,912,772         | S 2440, also known as the Child Victims Act, was signed into law February 14, 2019.  |
| Connecticut   | \$875,261           | Several bills address civil and criminal SOL; SB 3 passed the Senate on May 16, 2019, the House on June 1, 2019, and is now with the Governor.   |
| New Jersey    | \$633,458           | Bill S 477 was signed into law on May 13, 2019.  |
| Massachusetts | \$537,551           | Several bills address civil and criminal SOL; S 920, S 980, and H 3309 were introduced and referred to Joint Committee on the Judiciary on January 22, 2019.   |
| New Hampshire | \$134,345           | No legislation has been introduced.  |
| Maine         | \$124,260           | SP 20/LD 67 passed the full Senate on April 30, 2019 and the full House on May 2, 2019; the House bill is with the Senate for concurrence.   |
| Rhode Island  | \$61,961            | Several bills address civil and criminal SOL; the House and Senate Judiciary Committees recommended H 5171, H5515, and S 315 be held for further study on March 12, 2019. The House passed H 5171 on May 30, 2019. |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>\$10,602,587</b> |  |

Lobbying isn't the only way the Church is trying to protect itself. **\$57 million**: the amount of money that Cardinal Timothy Dolan, then Archbishop of Milwaukee, requested in 2007 to move into a cemetery trust fund to protect it from victims of clergy sexual abuse demanding compensation.<sup>iv</sup>

### SPOTLIGHT: CATHOLIC CHURCH LOBBYING IN NEW YORK, NEW JERSEY AND PENNSYLVANIA

The Church spent nearly \$3 million on lobbying in New York, with 80 percent of that spending – \$2,329,071 – going to a Church-sponsored policy arm called the Catholic Conference Policy Group, Inc. Beginning in 2011, the Catholic Conference Policy Group, Inc. had the sole mission of lobbying on "statute of limitations, legislative issues, and liability issues." This specialized Church lobbying arm, in turn, enlisted some of the most prestigious and powerful

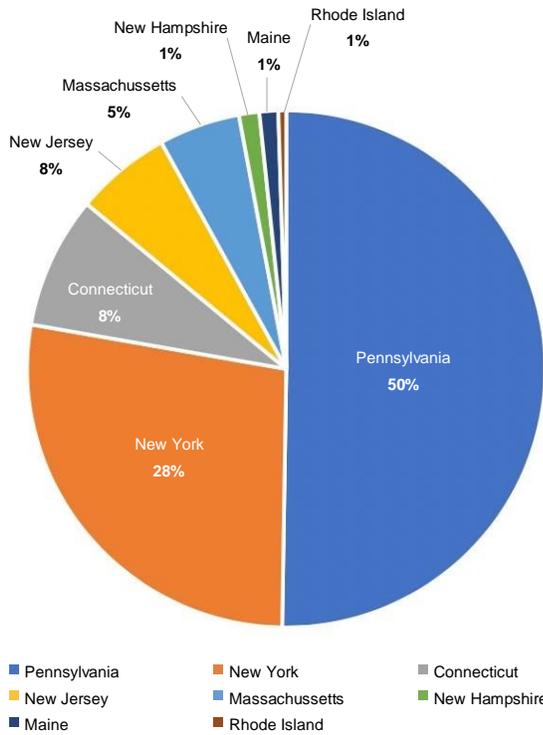
lobbying firms in the state.

The Catholic Conference Policy Group, Inc. and its outside lobbyists specifically targeted the Child Victims Act (CVA), in a 13-year battle to thwart efforts to provide justice to New York survivors of clergy sex abuse. Despite the Church's longstanding opposition to the CVA,

and significant investments to stop the legislation, the bill passed the New York legislature on January 28, 2019 and was signed into law by Gov. Andrew Cuomo on February 14, 2019. The new law creates a one-year window for survivors to file lawsuits that were previously barred by the statute of limitations and extends the statute of limitations for both criminal and civil cases going forward.

The remainder of the Church's lobbying in New York state is carried out through the New York State Catholic Conference, which works on a broader set of issues that includes legislative issues and statutes of limitations.

## PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL LOBBYING EXPENDITURES BY STATE

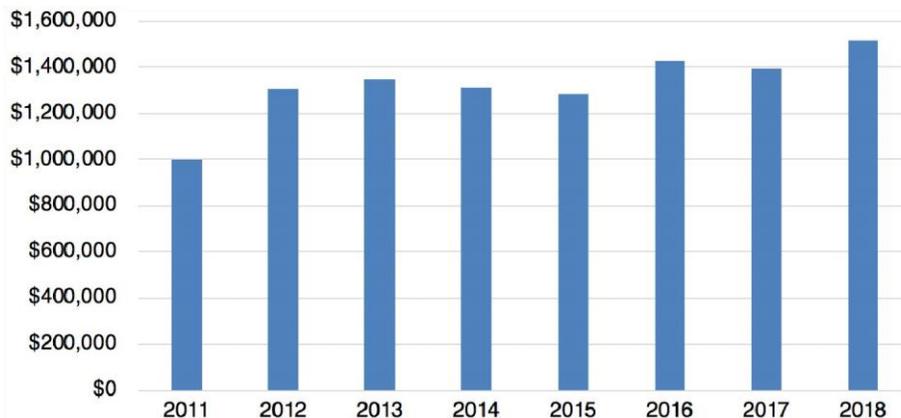


The Church has spent more than \$600,000 lobbying in New Jersey where a bill to waive the statute of limitations for a two-year window recently passed the legislature and was signed into law by Gov. Phil Murphy.

The most spending on lobbying in the Northeast – more than \$5.3 million – has occurred in Pennsylvania, where a grand jury report was released in 2018 that detailed the evidence of more than 300 priests credibly accused of sexually abusing more than 1,000 child victims in the state. The report recommended reforms regarding statute of limitations, mandated reporting, and confidentiality agreements. Both chambers have since offered competing proposals that would address the reforms.

The House has passed HB 962 and HB 963, and they are now in the Senate Judiciary Committee. HB 962 would eliminate the statute of limitations for criminal prosecution and give survivors of child sex abuse until 55 to sue, and HB 963 would open a two-year window for lawsuits previously barred by the statute of limitations. SB 540 – introduced by the State Senate in April – would make similar changes in one bill instead of splitting them up and open a two-year window for survivors of sex abuse regardless of their age when the abuse occurred.<sup>v</sup>

## CATHOLIC CHURCH LOBBYING IN THE NORTHEAST\*



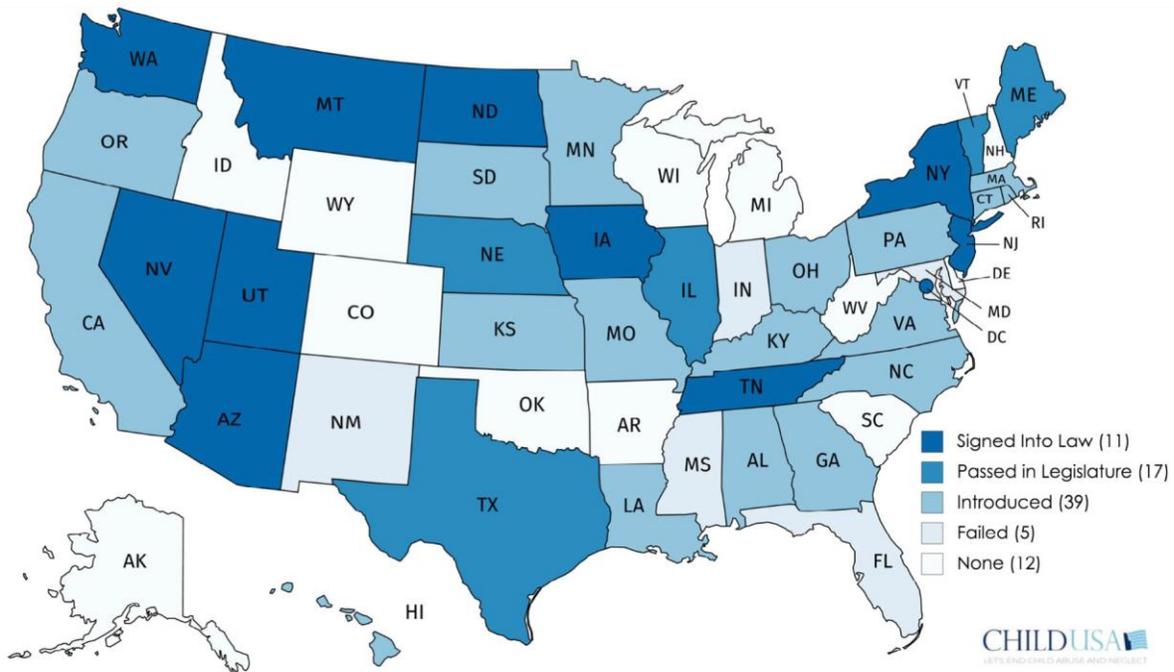
\*In New Hampshire, data is for 2014-2018; in Connecticut the data is for two-year reporting periods between 2013-2018 with the data split evenly between the two years<sup>v</sup>

## STATES PUSH FORWARD: STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS LAWS PROGRESS IN NORTH DAKOTA, WASHINGTON AND WASHINGTON, D.C.

While a significant amount of attention has focused on efforts in the Northeastern U.S. to enact legislation that extends statutes of limitations, states outside the Northeast are also working to enact reforms. On March 21, 2019 North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum signed into law HB 1425, which more than doubled the statute of limitations to 21 years for prosecuting sex crimes perpetrated against minors. On April 19, 2019 Washington Gov. Jay Inslee signed into law SB 5649, which extends the statute of limitations for some cases of sexual assault and eliminates the statute of limitations for serious sex crimes against children. Washington, D.C.'s bill, which went into effect May 3, 2019, eliminates the criminal statute of limitations for many cases of child sex abuse, extends the civil statute of limitations, and opens a two-year lookback window.

As part of this important trend, more than 20 other states across the country are also considering similar legislation which would benefit survivors of sexual abuse.

### 2019 STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS REFORM LEGISLATION\*<sup>VII</sup>



\*Map from ChildUSA.org as of May 28, 2019

<sup>i</sup> Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis To the People of God, *Vatican News*, August 20, 2018, [link](#)  
<sup>ii</sup> Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Lobbying Disclosure Public Reports, 2011-2018, [link](#); New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics Lobbying Online Filing System, 2011-2018, [link](#); State of Connecticut Office of State Ethics, 2013-2019, [link](#); New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission Annual Lobbyist Reports, 2011-2018, [link](#); Commonwealth of Massachusetts Lobbyist Public Search, 2011-2018, [link](#); New Hampshire Lobbyist Reports, 2014-2018, [link](#); Maine Commission on Governmental Ethics & Election Practices, 2011-2018, [link](#); State of Rhode Island Lobby Tracker, 2011-2018, [link](#)  
<sup>iii</sup> 2019 Statute of Limitations Reform Legislation, Child USA, [link](#)  
<sup>iv</sup> Dolan Sought to Protect Church Assets, Files Show, *The New York Times*, July 1, 2013, [link](#)  
<sup>v</sup> Competing bills broaden and complicate efforts to reform child sex crime laws in Pennsylvania, *Penn Live*, April 20, 2019, [link](#)  
<sup>vi</sup> Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Lobbying Disclosure Public Reports, 2011-2018, [link](#); New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics Lobbying Online Filing System, 2011-2018, [link](#); State of Connecticut Office of State Ethics, 2013-2018, [link](#); New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission Annual Lobbyist Reports, 2011-2018, [link](#); Commonwealth of Massachusetts Lobbyist Public Search, 2011-2018, [link](#); New Hampshire Lobbyist Reports, 2014-2018, [link](#); Maine Commission on Governmental Ethics & Election Practices, 2011-2018, [link](#); State of Rhode Island Lobby Tracker, 2011-2018, [link](#).<sup>vii</sup> 2019 Statute of Limitations Reform Legislation, Child USA, [link](#)