



**State Senator Stephanie Kunze  
District 16**

**State Senator Nickie J. Antonio  
District 23**

Senate Judiciary Committee  
December 7, 2021  
Senate Bill 226 Sponsor Testimony

Senator Kunze:

Thank you Chair Manning, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary committee for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 226, which would extend the period of limitation for child abuse or neglect from the age of majority to age 26. Ultimately, this bill seeks to allow justice to take place for the many children who were abused by adults in positions of power.

This legislation is a result of conversations with a resident of Central Ohio who shared his story of abuse with me. As a young teen, an adult in a position of power within a church located in Central Ohio sexually abused him. Over the next 14 years following his abuse, he experienced flashbacks of running from his abuser, but not of the abuse itself. However, over a year ago, he began psychotherapy, which helped him to remember the details of his assault at the hands of an adult in power.

Once he fully grasped what had transpired on that day over 14 years before, he reported the assault to the Delaware County Sheriff's office and the Diocese of Columbus. His allegation was found credible by both organizations, making it the fourth credible accusation against his abuser. However, he was unable to press civil or criminal charges against the man who assaulted him because the period of limitations had expired.

Senator Antonio:

Under current Ohio law, victims of childhood sexual abuse are unable to press civil charges after age 30 and criminal charges after age 43, with another 5 years granted if DNA is found within 25 years. Also, these victims are capped at \$250,000 in maximum damages that they can receive, which usually is only enough to cover their attorney's fees. This is an area of concern to Senator Kunze and myself because, according to Marci Hamilton, founder of CHILD USA, the average age at which victims of child sexual abuse come forward is 52 years old. Changing the Ohio Revised Code to extend the period of limitation for childhood abuse or neglect connects victim statistics with our law and better protects the children of Ohio.

Our children are the most vulnerable and trusting subset of our population. Under our current law; we are not doing all that we can to protect them. Extending the period of limitation for child abuse or neglect from the age of majority to age 26 will allow a higher percentage of Ohioans who were abused as a child to obtain justice. We also know that brains do not fully develop until the age 25. By raising the statute of limitations to 26, we will allow for the gap between an 18 year old's brain development to fully mature. By passing this law, Ohio will join Arkansas, Louisiana, North Carolina, New York, New Jersey, California, and Nevada who have all passed legislation to allow survivors a set time period to come forward with their case.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation. We are happy to answer any questions the committee may have at this time.