

Good morning.

Chairman McColley and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee; thank you for having me today.

My name is Seth Porter. I am a Chillicothe native, an Ohio State *and* Ohio University graduate and I currently live in Upper Arlington, Ohio with my loving wife and three daughters.

Many of my earliest childhood memories outside of my home are my experiences with the Cub Scouts. Scouting was a big part of my life for over a decade. Growing up in Chillicothe, there was a prominent Boy Scout troop that was known for its extravagant trips and *extremely* involved adult leadership. What was also unique about the troop was that the adult leadership rarely included parents of the scouts, instead it was chaperoned by an omnipresent group of adult men with no children.

My parents and the parents of many other scouts over the years were suspicious of these scouting leaders. There was talk of out-of-court settlements, hush money and skeletons in the closets of these men. The adult leadership was eventually removed from the

church that my family attended, but later set-up shop at other churches in the community.

Boy Scouts of America was rumored to have banned the scoutmaster from involvement with scouting, but nothing was ever communicated to the troop members or their families. The same scoutmaster was later discovered to have been asked to resign decades earlier from the local middle school due to inappropriate student-teacher relationships. Despite countless red flags, not a single police action, court action or news media outlet dug into the local Boy Scout leadership until 2020 when a handful of brave men in their 40's came forward. These grown men were left unimpeded in their grooming of Ohio boys for decades, starting at least in the early 1980's.

I understand that some members of the legislature have an opinion that memories of deep personal trauma can fade over time, and that belief reinforces the need for Ohio to maintain some of the nation's most restrictive statute of limitations for victims of sexual assault. As a victim of sexual assault, I can assure you that my memories haven't faded over the past 27 years. The abuse I endured repeatedly was by a Boy Scout leader at a Boy Scout camp while overseen by adult male chaperones. And my story is not unique.

In fact, it's far too common. Several Ohio men with similar stories have banded together to support each other and to help drive meaningful changes to the restrictive laws that serve to protect the pedophiles and perpetrators of child sex crimes.

Me sitting before you today isn't an opportunity I feel fortunate to have. While I appreciate the opportunity to tell you a small part of my story, I would have much preferred that someone would have done something to protect me and my Boy Scout peers in the 1980's and 90's. Unfortunately, that never happened. My abuser was walking free until 2020 when he was put in prison after being found guilty of raping Upper Arlington Boy Scouts that he was tutoring.

For more than two decades, I never told a single person of my trauma because I was afraid. I'm not alone. There are over 82,000 Boy Scout victims nationally that have come forward and nearly 2,000 in Ohio alone. As a function of Ohio's restrictive civil statute of limitations and the structure of the trust payout matrix, any potential monetary damages owed to Ohio's victims will be reduced to a fraction of what they're eligible for under the proposed Boy Scout victim's trust. For many of us, we feel like we're being abused again.

You have the ability to change the law and put Ohio's victims on the same level as other states. I urge you to support House Bill 35, the new Scouts Honor Law, to provide the survivors of abuse with an opportunity to receive the entirety of what they're eligible for. I personally believe that the legislature's support will also send a message to the nearly 2,000 Ohio survivors, and the many that remain silent, that you do care about them. You recognize their trauma and the harm that was done. You understand the courage it takes to come forward at any age. And you recognize that more needs to be done to remove protections for the sexual predators that view Ohio as a happy hunting ground to prey on Ohio's children.

As a part of my testimony, I am providing the message I shared for the first time on July 11th, 2020 to my family and friends on Facebook. I am also sharing a Facebook post that was posted the next day by the serial child molester- admitting what he did to countless young boys over the prior decades. Because of the Ohio's existing laws, he is still walking free in Chillicothe.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you.

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Seth Porter

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July 11 at 9:16 PM · 🌐

Several people have asked me over the last few weeks about my connections to Bill McKell, and I wanted to address those questions publicly.

Bill McKell is a monster. I have experienced first hand his ability to create a public persona to perpetuate a scheme of child molestation. Bill has carefully cultivated an image of a disciple of God, an educator, a mentor, a passionate Boy Scout leader and a respected businessman in the community of Chillicothe. Bill has leveraged that public image for decades to prey upon and take advantage of the families that have entrusted him with their sons.

I am not a victim of Bill McKell. However, I was repeatedly molested by Dan Burris ~ 25 years ago while under the supervision of Bill McKell and while participating in his Boy Scout program. Those two child predators were very close friends for decades, and in many cases they were the only adult chaperones along with a group of boys over multiday trips.

My personal story is identical to every story that has been told by the victims of Bill McKell. And like most of the other victims, I have kept my secret and remained silent for 25 years. I recently broke my silence to two of Bill McKell's victims who gave me the courage to come forward and share my story. They know who they are, and I thank them for giving me that courage. Friends are friends forever, as we told ourselves decades ago.

My silence of 25 years contributed to the continued victimization by Dan Burris. Dan is currently serving a 14 year prison term for raping two boys in my Columbus neighborhood. I'm tired of being silent and allowing these monsters to continue to physically and emotionally terrorize boys and young men.

I encourage any other victim to share their story with someone that is willing to listen. There is no shame in being a victim and sharing your story. It may prevent others from being victimized by child predators like Bill McKell and Dan Burris.

I hope the people of Chillicothe continue to support the victims of Bill McKell and Dan Burris. The justice the victims deserve is long overdue and should be severe.

I also welcome anyone to share my personal story. In doing so, it may save someone else.

If you have been abused by Bill McKell, police encourage you to call them at 740-773-1911 and ask to speak to a detective; your identity can be kept confidential. If you or someone you know has been victim to sexual assault, help is available by calling 800.656.HOPE.



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65 Comments 275 Shares





Bill McKell

12 mins · 🌐

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## Open Letter

My name is Bill McKell and I am a child molester.

Every 12-step program begins with admission. I have been one who abused teenage boys. As far as I am able to tell, it is a disease of the mind not unlike alcoholism or drug addiction. It is a sickness that can never be cured or healed, only recovered from. That being said, there is no excuse for what I have done.

Over the last week, a police report that should have remained private has been spread all over social media. As one who has been charged with no crime and who has had no opportunity to present a legally-represented defense, I should be upset. I am not upset for myself since this social media wildfire has driven me to this admission. But I am upset that the names and pain of my accusers have been so publicly displayed and that a similarly horrific social media campaign could be waged against almost anyone.

But this one has been waged against me and I have something to admit. During my late teens, twenties and early thirties, I had inappropriate contact with a number of young men.

In 1996, I attended a spiritual renewal weekend that changed my life as I realized how truly sick I was. At that point, I committed myself to recovery. I would love to say I was instantly "cured." I was not, but I am recovered.

I sincerely apologize and seek the forgiveness of each person I have caused to suffer hurt and shame. You were among my closest friends and I abused your friendship and betrayed your trust. I am truly sorry. I also wish to seek the forgiveness of your parents, spouses, children and any others who have suffered from the scars I have inflicted.

While I will vigorously defend myself from any false charges brought against me, I will direct my counsel to work cooperatively on any legitimate charge.

While recovery is challenging, I have learned that limits, control and accountability are key. Accountability has always been hampered by my fear of confession. One wonderful friend even gave me an opportunity to confess and, I hope, to receive forgiveness, but I was too much of a coward to seize the opportunity.

Accountability will be easier now that everyone around me is aware of my disease. It is the "everyone around me" that I must apologize to next. To my former coworkers and those who have defended me through the rumors and accusations because they could not reconcile the man they know with the man described, I thank you and I'm sorry. Please forgive me for letting you down. I am working hard to remain only the man you know. This admission finally gives me the freedom to get the professional help I need to assure that.

Finally, I seek mercy and grace from my family—immediate and otherwise. I am causing you much shame and pain and anguish. I am so sorry you are suffering for my sins. Please forgive me. I pray you will be given space to grieve.

I seek prayers for everyone I have hurt.