

JEB BARRETT TESTIMONY on HB 20-1296 – March 5, 2020

My name is Jeb Barrett, a retired mental health and substance abuse therapist, the Denver Leader of the international Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, and a member of Colorado Justice for Victims and the Child Sexual Assault State Task Force. I am here today representing the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests in strong support of HB 20-1296.

In 2005, I worked with Senate President Joan Fitz Gerald and Representative Gwyn Green to remove the civil SOL for Sexual Assault of a Child with a 2-year window. However, the Colorado Catholic Conference fought extending the SOL with the necessary window, so the bill was withdrawn on the last night of the General Assembly.

Since most childhood abuse victims don't come forward until their 40s or 50s if they ever do, very few report these crimes before the SOL has run. SNAP is committed to exposing hidden predators, healing victims and preventing abuse.

I was first assaulted by a relative, then scoutmaster, a music teacher and a priest. Because I disassociated, the only emotional memory of these betrayals I have is terror. None of these assaults were reported until I found the personal power to do so, one at a time.

At 18, I had a suicide attempt, but soon found escape in alcohol. At 39, I hit bottom, sought help for my drinking and was diagnosed as bipolar. In 2002, I was diagnosed with ADHD and dealing with PTSD. I now have 41½ years of sobriety. Had I not sought help I would be dead, like countless child victims, including my partner Norman who committed suicide in 1984.

As a therapist, I inwardly identified with clients who had never talked about molestation as children, I didn't talk about my history until age 63 when I attended my first SNAP support meeting.

Healing is a continuing process of coping with the past. At 81, I continue therapy for PTSD, anxiety, trusting others and physical contact. On the positive side, I am committed to doing all I can to prevent what happened to me from happening to others.

Just as I will never know what it is like to grow up without being sexually violated, those who have not experienced such betrayal will never know what we live with. It never goes away.

In eliminating the civil statute at this time, those violated in the future will have access to our justice system, a step forward in exposing otherwise hidden sexual predators that institutions continue to hide. It will encourage future victims to seek help for the trauma they will experience. However, it still ignores the needs of past victims who continue to suffer in shame and silence.

PLEASE KNOW THIS: We only share our shame with those who have earned our trust.

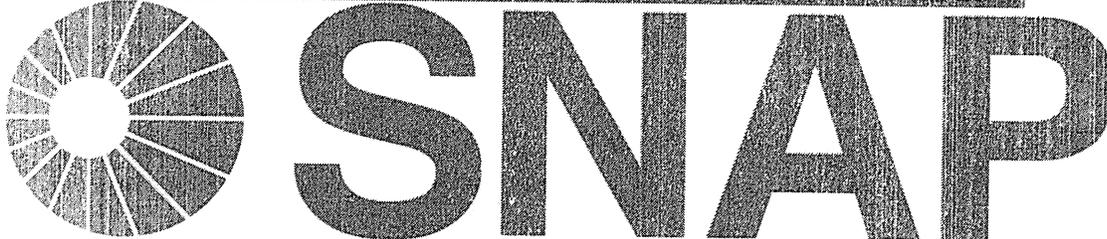
All institutions with access to the most vulnerable need to be held accountable, the Boy Scouts, churches, sports organizations and others.

The national cost of treatment, institutionalization and addiction is beyond imagining. We know that the effects of unresolved childhood trauma upon early brain development is an underlying cause of most mental health and addiction problems. These costs can effectively be reduced by early intervention, prevention programs and legislative support.

For these reasons, I support HB20-1296 and urge a "yes" vote from this committee. Thank you for your time this afternoon. I am open to any questions you may have

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Protect the vulnerable. Heal the wounded. Prevent abuse.



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