



MELISSA AGARD
STATE SENATOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Clergy Mandatory Reporting Bill Would Bring Justice, Accountability

Madison, WI - Today, Senators Melissa Agard (D-Madison) and Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee), joined by Representative Kristina Shelton (D-Green Bay), released LRB-6112, a bill that would require members of clergy, like other professionals interacting with children, to report all instances of child abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse, of which they become aware in their professional capacity. Peter Isley, Program Director of Nate's Mission, joined Agard in support of the bill. Nate's Mission is committed to "dismantling the structural mechanisms that allow abuse" within churches.

Senator Agard, Peter Isley released the following statements:

Senator Agard:

"For far too long, secrecy has clouded justice and healing for victims. It is time to put an end to keeping the known abuse of children in the shadows. This bill will hold accountable clergy and faith leaders who sexually abuse children, as well as those who have worked to hide this abuse. These are heinous crimes and an abuse of power.

"We must do all that we can to protect kids from perpetrators and ensure there are avenues to interrupt patterns of abuse. It is imperative that the legislature take up this vital piece of legislation."

Peter Isley, Nate's Mission:

"It is appalling that after years of revelations of cover up of child sex crimes by church officials, under Wisconsin law clergy are the only professionals working with children and families that are exempt from reporting known and suspected child abuse and neglect.

"In fact, Wisconsin law explicitly allows them to keep these crimes against children secret. This must be changed. It's children and not child predators that the law is meant to protect. Each day this law is not reformed is another day Wisconsin children are put at risk."

To report current or past abuse by clergy and faith leaders in Wisconsin, call 1-877-222-2620 or report abuse using the Department of Justice's online reporting tool at <https://supportsurvivors.wisconsin.gov/>

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