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February 11, 2015

His Holiness, Pope Francis
Apostolic Palace
00120 Vatican City

Most Holy Father:

Those of us in New York who are battling the scourge of childhood sexual abuse were encouraged by your strong message of February 2, 2015, to the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. We took particular note of your call to open pathways of reconciliation and healing for those who have been abused and your reminder that there is no place in the ministry for those who abuse children.

Reports after the first meeting of the Commission said there was a strong sentiment for recommendations to hold bishops accountable for cover-ups or failing to prevent abuse. This is a view that resonates strongly in America, where there have been several notorious examples of cover-up over recent years that have revealed how abusers of children have been hidden by clergy and often remained free to continue their despicable crimes.

In New York, as in many states in America, the fight to address childhood sexual abuse has often revolved around reforming archaic statutes of limitations that restrict the ability of victims to get justice for the crimes done against them by abusers and the organizations that have protected them. Unfortunately, Catholic Bishops have been among the most vocal opponents of reform of these statutes in so many states, particularly in New York.

In fact, the opposition to reform of New York's statutes of limitations has been largely mounted by the Bishops of our own state. This opposition appears to directly contradict the reforms in the Church's own changes in Canon Law in 2001, 2003 and 2010 relating to statutes of limitations and as well as your own views on the subject expressed over the past several months.

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Page 2, His Holiness, Pope Francis, February 11, 2015

We are all delighted to know that you will be coming to New York City in September. Some of us who have been outspoken in the struggle to provide support and justice for survivors of child sexual abuse would like to meet with you to ask for your help in convincing New York Bishops to bring their views in alignment with yours on the subject of abuse.

Meeting with key members of the New York State Legislature and representatives of organizations that are hard at work to update the laws of our state would provide a symbolic opportunity to the general public and New York clergy about the importance of this issue.

New York ranks among the very worst of the 50 American states in how it deals with child sex abuse crimes and opposition of New York Bishops continues to prolong the agony of victims, delay justice for them, and leave perpetrators free to continue their abuse.

I look forward to hearing from you about the possibility of this meeting. Please contact my office for further information at 718-651-3185, markeym@assembly.state.ny.us

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margaret Markey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Margaret M. Markey

CC: Cardinal Sean O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston