

# Sandusky's adopted son joins call for Pa. to expand statute of limitations in abuse lawsuits

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HARRISBURG, Pennsylvania — Jerry Sandusky's adopted son Matt joined a handful of state lawmakers and others Wednesday to urge passage of proposals to expand or eliminate Pennsylvania's statute of limitations in child sexual abuse lawsuits.

Advocates spoke in favor of proposals to raise the age limit on filing such lawsuits from 30 to 50, do away with the statute of limitations altogether or provide a window during which people can pursue claims, despite existing time limits.

"We have to start caring — we have to start caring about each other," said Matt Sandusky, who settled a claim with Penn State over allegations that Jerry Sandusky abused him as a child. Matt Sandusky now runs a foundation to educate people about child sexual abuse.

Rep. Mark Rozzi, D-Berks, said the House of Representatives should allow floor votes on bills that he said are currently bottled up in committee.

Robert Hoatson, a former Catholic priest, said attendees were there "as a result of sexual abuse as minors. Our souls were murdered in many ways. There should not be a statute of limitations on soul murder."

The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference does not support the proposals, saying statutes of limitations help ensure fairness in verdicts.

"With the passage of time, evidence may be lost, memories may fade and witnesses may die," said Amy Hill, a spokeswoman for the conference. "Repealing the statute of limitations would make it impossible for any individual, church or organization to defend itself against allegations 30, 40 or 50 years old."

Pennsylvania criminal law allows charges when a child is abused until the victim turns 50, but civil lawsuits may not be filed after the victim turns 30.

A November 2012 report by a state Task Force on Child Protection, set up by the Legislature in the wake of the clergy abuse and Sandusky scandals, concluded the state's current limits are adequate and the panel did not recommend that lawmakers change them.

The task force report said adults who were abused as children and who now cannot sue "justifiably want to revive their claims but are barred from doing so. The task force declined to recommend a 'revival' statute because of the potential for staleness of evidence and possible constitutional concerns."

Jerry Sandusky, a retired Penn State assistant football coach, is serving a 30- to 60-year sentence after being convicted of abuse of 10 boys. Matt Sandusky's allegations arose during his adoptive father's 2012 trial, but Jerry Sandusky has not been charged with any crime in relation to Matt Sandusky.

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