

PA Legislature to Consider Opening Two Year Window for Time Barred Sexual Abuse Claims

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On May 6, 2025, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives' Judiciary Committee announced its approval of two separate bills that would open a two-year window for victims of sexual abuse to file civil lawsuits for claims that are currently precluded by the statute of limitations or sovereign immunity. Both bills will now advance to the full Pennsylvania House of Representatives for further consideration.

In 2019, Pennsylvania passed legislation that extended the civil statute of limitations for childhood sexual abuse cases, giving victims until they turn 55 years old to file claims. However, the 2019 law does not apply retroactively, leaving some victims without recourse because their claims were already barred by the statute of limitations. The new bills aim to close that gap once and for all by allowing all victims of sexual abuse to file claims during a two-year window.

The two bills are House Bill 462 and House Bill 464:

House Bill 462: This bill provides a *statutory* two-year window during which survivors of childhood sexual abuse could file previously time-barred civil claims. It would also waive sovereign immunity retroactively under certain circumstances, allowing survivors to file claims against state and local agencies.

House Bill 464: This bill calls for an *amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution* establishing a two-year window for survivors to bring forward civil claims that were previously blocked due to expired statutes of limitations. The amendment also waives sovereign immunity retroactively under certain circumstances.

The Judiciary Committee's approval of the two bills followed a hearing where advocates and legal experts offered testimony in support of the legislation. Despite bipartisan support for these proposals over the last several years, previous efforts to pass such legislation have failed for various reasons.

When announcing the approval of the bills, Tim Briggs, Pennsylvania State Representative and Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, said "These bills are about fairness, healing and restoring the rights of people who were silenced for far too long." "We owe survivors the chance to be heard in a court of law, no matter how much time has passed." "The Judiciary Committee's action is a powerful

statement that justice delayed does not have to mean justice denied.” “We are finally moving toward a day when all survivors have the chance to seek accountability and healing.”

A similar law was passed in New York in 2019, after which we saw an explosion of sexual abuse cases filed in that jurisdiction. If either of the new Pennsylvania bills become law in the coming months, we expect that an enormous amount of sexual abuse lawsuits will be filed within that two-year window. It is important to start preparing now for the rush of claims that we anticipate will be filed once this legislation is passed.

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