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Statement from DarrowEverett attorney Timothy Conlon

This report reveals, in shocking and sometimes excruciating detail, the lengths to which an entity, however devoted to lofty ideals, in practice employed its resources and legal might to protect itself for decades at the expense of our state's children — by hiding the dark secret that it used its power to provide shelter to pedophiles.

The beginning of the end to that dark passage came in July 2002, when Judge Robert D. Krause, of this state's Superior Court, declared that "by no elastic stretch of the most fertile imagination" did the First Amendment protect such tortious behavior by a religious Institution.

We see now that the Diocese had lost the common sense to realize that faith is shaken by any institution so audacious to suggest that it had constitutional immunity from judicial Review.

Rhode Islanders now fully understand why Attorney General Peter Neronha said he found his faith shaken in preparing this report.

But the Attorney General's report cannot be the final chapter. This report is a call for action

... and the Rhode Island Supreme Court told us where that action must come from. It ruled that our legislature's 2019 revisions to the civil statute of limitations did not allow our Courts to hear victims' claims in the civil justice system, even where there was criminal misconduct of the institution. Thus, in Rhode Island, unlike many other states, victims seeking relief for the damages sustained as a result of the heinous, systemic misconduct documented in this report, encounter a system of justice that is not only blind, but turns a deaf ear.

This, despite Judge Netti C. Vogel's recognition that: "It is difficult to imagine a greater betrayal of trust than to perpetuate practices and policies that knowingly expose innocent children to horrific harm." *Edwardo v. Gelineau*, RI Sup Ct. CA 2019-9894, Oct 16, 2020.

Accountability demands action, and our Supreme Court made it clear that the need to act falls to the state legislature, if the Courts are to be available to bring justice to those Victims.

Where facts shake our faith in our institutions, the remedy is to shake back and bring Rhode Island law into concert with the many states that have held such archaic practices to accountability. Judge Vogel cited Nelson Mandela well: "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."