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**ARCHBISHOP CHARLES J. CHAPUT, O.F.M. Cap.
ANNOUNCES ESTABLISHMENT OF INDEPENDENT
RECONCILIATION AND REPARATIONS PROGRAM
TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE**

Today's announcement follows a pledge made by Archbishop Chaput in September to spearhead a program administered independently of Church leadership or influence that will provide financial compensation and support for those sexually abused as minors by Archdiocesan clergy.

Contextual Background

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia has a longstanding commitment to the prevention of child abuse and to providing support for those who suffered sexual abuse at the hands of its clergy and lay employees. We continue to express sincere sorrow for past failures that harmed the most vulnerable among us — children and young adults. We deeply regret the pain and suffering of survivors and any decisions that failed to protect them.

Over the past 15 years, the local Church in Philadelphia has implemented initiatives aimed at creating the safest possible environment for young people and offering a path toward healing for those harmed in the past. Those programs have evolved over time and have been led by lay men and women who came to the Archdiocese with the professional expertise and credentials necessary to make them as effective as possible. Additional information about the lessons learned in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia as well as the many steps it has taken in response can be found at www.AOPpledgetoProtect.com.

The release of the Pennsylvania State Grand Jury Report in August was a moment of deep reflection on the ugly record of past sexual abuse by clergy in our Commonwealth. While that report did not involve the Archdiocese, it was a stark reminder of the experience of Philadelphia grand juries in 2005 and 2011.

[In September, Archbishop Chaput joined with his brother bishops throughout the state in committing to create new modes of support for survivors of sexual abuse by clergy.](#) At that time he said, “We recognize our responsibility to provide an opportunity for sexual abuse survivors whose cases are time-barred from pursuing civil claims to share their experiences, identify their abusers, and receive compensation to assist their healing and recovery.”

[The Archbishop pledged support for all reasonable and constitutional efforts focused on helping survivors and their families on a path toward healing.](#)

Today's Announcement

Following on his promise earlier this fall, Archbishop Chaput is taking the next step in the ongoing commitment of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to assist survivors of sexual abuse on their path to healing.

The Archdiocese is launching an Independent Reconciliation and Reparations Program. The goal is to provide financial support for victims of clergy sexual abuse, especially those whose cases are time barred from civil litigation.

The program will operate entirely free from the influence or supervision of Archdiocesan staff and leadership. Nationally respected, independent experts will have full authority to provide compensation for the good of survivors who need assistance.

This compensation program requires substantial fiscal commitment over time. It will impact the Church and her ministries in a serious way, but this will not deter the Archdiocese or the program from proceeding.

Structure of the Independent Reconciliation and Reparations Program (IRRP)

To ensure autonomy, an Independent Oversight Committee will monitor this program. That committee will consist of

- [The Honorable George J. Mitchell, former United States Senate Majority Leader,](#) who will chair the committee;
- [Kelley Hodge, former Interim District Attorney for the City and County of Philadelphia;](#) and
- [The Honorable Lawrence F. Stengel \(Ret.\), former Chief Judge for the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.](#)

In addition to overseeing the program, the committee will regularly review and evaluate existing Archdiocesan programs relative to child protection and abuse survivor assistance.

Claims submitted to the program will be administered by [Kenneth R. Feinberg and Camille S. Biros.](#) Mr. Feinberg previously served as Special Master for the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund. He also administered the Aurora Colorado Victim Relief Fund, the BP Oil—Gulf Coast Claims Facility, and the GM Ignition Compensation Claims Resolution Facility, *inter alios*.

More recently, he and Ms. Biros, served as the administrators of claims programs for survivors of sexual abuse by clergy in multiple dioceses in the state of New York. They are nationally recognized experts in claims administration who have developed special expertise in programs of this nature.

These administrators will have complete authority to determine eligibility of individual claims and the amount of reparations for survivors who come forward.

Claimants will be supported by a Victim Support Facilitator, [Lynn Shiner](#), former Director of the Office for Victims' Services at the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. In that role, she oversaw Pennsylvania's public crime victim compensation program.

Overall, this effort seeks to provide survivors with a secure and respectful means to resolve their claims and receive compensation without the ambiguity, conflict, stress, and expense of litigation.

The IRRP was developed by the claims administrators, and has been reviewed and approved by the Oversight Committee and Ms. Shiner. The Committee will announce details of the program at a news conference on November 13th.

Funding for the Independent Reconciliation and Reparations Program

Initial funding for this program will be provided by existing Archdiocesan assets. While the number of potential claims is unknown at this time, the Archdiocese expects that the resources ultimately required by the IRRP will be significantly greater than the initial funding. Additional program funding will need to come from borrowing and the sale of archdiocesan properties. Which properties will be sold has not yet been determined.

It is important to note that the Archdiocese *will not* fund the IRRP using any money given to the Catholic Charities Appeal, Seminary Appeal, other donor-designated funds, or donations made to parishes, ministries, and schools.

Reparation amounts provided to survivors are at the sole discretion of those administering claims for the IRRP.

Additional Modes of Support for Survivors and Their Loved Ones

With today's announcement, the Archdiocesan commitment to providing as many modes of support and healing for survivors of sexual abuse and their loved ones reaches a new level. The Office for Child and Youth Protection, which administers the Archdiocesan Victim Assistance program will also continue its ministry. For over 15 years it has provided hundreds of individuals with resources and care based on treatment plans developed by independent therapists. Since its inception, over \$18 million has been dedicated to care for survivors and resources will continue to be spent in this fashion in addition to what is provided through the IRRP.

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Editor's Note: For additional information on the Archdiocesan commitment to child protection and abuse survivor assistance as well as a video message from Archbishop Chaput, please visit www.AOPpledgetoProtect.com.

To read Archbishop Chaput's column regarding the Independent Reconciliation and Reparations Program, which was published today, please visit www.CatholicPhilly.com.