

Contact:

Amy Weiss 202-203-0448

amy@weisspublicaffairs.com

for

Kenneth Feinberg & Camille Biros

Steve Pehanich

California Catholic Conference

spehanich@cacatholic.org

(916) 313-4014

California Catholic Dioceses Announce New Compensation Program for Abuse Victims

- Six California dioceses including the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and the Dioceses of Fresno, Orange, Sacramento, San Bernardino and San Diego, serving 80% of state's Catholic population, have committed to the new program, which is independent of Church control;
- Nationally known mediators Kenneth Feinberg and Camille Biros will design and administer the program. An oversight board that includes former Governor Gray Davis and business leader and former Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration, Maria Contreras-Sweet, will oversee the implementation and administration of the program.
- Later this year, victim-survivors, including undocumented immigrants, can apply for compensation for past abuse, regardless of when that abuse occurred.
- Fully completed and documented claims will be determined within 90 days of a victim-survivor filing a claim

SACRAMENTO, May 14, 2019 — Catholic bishops in California today announced the establishment of a new compensation program that will be available to any person who has been sexually abused as a minor by diocesan priests of the participating dioceses, no matter when that abuse might have occurred.

The new Independent Compensation Program for Victim-Survivors of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests is independent from Church control. Kenneth R. Feinberg and Camille S. Biros, nationally known mediators and private compensation program administrators, have been working with the California bishops since last November to design and administer the program.

The program will be overseen by an independent oversight board that includes former Governor Gray Davis and business leader and former Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration, Maria Contreras-Sweet.

Feinberg and Biros are running similar abuse compensation programs covering Catholic dioceses in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Colorado.

The California program announced today will include the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the Dioceses of Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, Orange, and Fresno. Together, these dioceses comprise more than 10 million Catholics, or about 80 percent of the state's Catholic population.

A program website is being finalized and there will be a forthcoming announcement by Feinberg and Biros on the program launch. A draft Protocol and Frequently Asked Questions are available. They will be finalized prior to the program launch.

This new program is voluntary. Victim-survivors can elect to enter this program as an alternative to pursuing their claims against the Church in court.

Feinberg and Biros will have complete autonomy to determine the eligibility of individual claims and they alone will determine the amount of compensation offered to any victim. The dioceses have agreed to abide by Feinberg and Biros' decisions and the amounts of the compensation awards are not subject to appeal by the dioceses.

The six dioceses will be reaching out to victims who have previously reported allegations of abuse to alert them to this new program. In addition, the program will invite others who may have been abused to also come forward.

Because the bishops are committed to providing avenues for all victims, this new program is open to a broader range than are eligible to pursue claims in civil courts. Those harmed many years ago and barred from filing lawsuits because of civil statutes of limitations will be eligible to make claims under this new program. Also, because this program has no proof-of-citizenship requirement, undocumented immigrants who may have been abused are also eligible to make claims.

Unlike civil litigation in the courts, this new program provides a process that is non-adversarial and protects victims' privacy. Victim-survivors do not need to have a lawyer to participate and there are no fees for participating. Settlements for fully completed claims can be paid within 90 days.

The new independent program is an important initiative in the California bishops' continuing commitment to provide pastoral care and financial support to victim-survivors of sexual abuse of minors by priests.

In the past two decades, Catholic dioceses in California have worked to provide assistance to abuse survivors, offering counseling and other support, while also paying close to \$1.5 billion to thousands of survivors in an effort to acknowledge responsibility for the grave offenses committed by priests and to compensate victims for their pain and suffering.

Catholic dioceses have also put in place strict policies and programs to protect young people and to create safe environments in parishes, schools and other ministries. Hundreds of thousands of adults throughout the state have been trained in abuse prevention and reporting. Hundreds of thousands more in leadership positions have been fingerprinted and undergone background checks. Dioceses have implemented strict reporting requirements, working closely with local law enforcement officials to immediately report abuse allegations and remove accused perpetrators from ministry.

As a result, new cases of sexual misconduct by priests involving minors are rare today in the Catholic Church in California. Nonetheless, the Bishops undertake this program in their continued efforts to provide avenues for victim-survivors of abuse to receive assistance to continue their healing.

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Attachments:

Independent Compensation Program for Victim-Survivors of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests
— Frequently Asked Questions (Draft)

Diocesan Contacts:

Archdiocese of Los Angeles	Adrian Marquez Alacron	(213) 637-7216
Diocese of Fresno	Teresa Dominguez	(559) 488-7400
Diocese of Orange	Tracey Kincaid	(714) 282-3075
Diocese of Sacramento	Kevin Eckery	(916) 443-2528
Diocese of San Bernardino	John Andrews	(909) 475-5420
Diocese of San Diego	Aida Bustos	(619) 850-1384
Spanish Language Contact	Christina Sanchez	(310) 420-1135