

Testimony for North Dakota House Bill 1382 by Paul Hessinger, Feb 3, 2021

"My name is Paul Hessinger. I was born and raised in Bismarck.

In 1967, two other boys and myself were sexually abused by two priests in New Leipzig, after they gave us alcohol. We were about 16-years-old. It was shocking and damaged my ability to trust. I will never forget being pawed and groped sexually by one man. Nor the feeling of his five o'clock shadow scraping against my face as he tried to kiss me. And the hopeless feeling as he was trying to tear off my clothes.

I never told my parents because I just thought it would kill them, as they were very staunch Catholics and very good Christians. I also thought my father might do something crazy or might kill them. Also, I suspected they would never forgive themselves.

I fell into drugs and alcohol for over 15 years, and bouts of depression, deep anxiety. I went to therapy and found I had PTSD, anxiety, insomnia, urticaria and many other things with which I have to struggle.

My pain and injustice have not gone away in 53 years. Why do abusers get a free pass after statutes run out? What justice or common sense is that?

People say a lawsuit would be damaging to a survivor. I guarantee you the long years of pain and suffering due to injustice and frustration of being blocked at every turn are FAR more damaging. Where could I go in 1967 to share that I have been sexually abused?

I hope you can see this through my eyes, and the eyes of survivors so that the legislature and the courts can begin to create a system of justice, rather than inadvertently protecting perpetrators and allowing injustice, pain and suffering to continue without an end in sight.