



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Attorney General Phil Weiser and Bishops of the Three Dioceses of the Catholic Church in Colorado Announce Joint Initiatives to Support Survivors of the Sexual Abuse of Minors

- *An independent reviewer will examine the records and policies of the three Dioceses about the sexual abuse of minors and draft a public report.*
- *Additionally, the three Dioceses will fund an independent, voluntary program that will compensate victims of abuse, regardless of when the abuse occurred.*
- *A separate victims' support service will be created to assist victims/survivors with the reparations program and connect them with resources for future care.*

February 19, 2019 (DENVER, Colo.) — Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser and Archbishop Samuel Aquila, on behalf of the Bishops of all three Dioceses of the Catholic Church in Colorado, today announced joint initiatives intended to support and comfort survivors of the sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests.

"The sexual abuse of minors is a societal problem that demands attention and action. I am pleased the Church has recognized the need for transparency and reparations for victims. This independent review promises a full evaluation and inquiry. For any victims of sexual abuse, this will provide a recognition of past wrongdoing and offer an opportunity for healing," said Attorney General Weiser.

Former Attorney General Cynthia Coffman, who initiated the review process last fall said: "It is my sincere hope that the independent review we announce today validates survivors of sexual abuse by priests and empowers them in their ongoing recovery. All survivors deserve to be believed and supported on their road to healing. I am encouraged that the Catholic Dioceses of Colorado have voluntarily agreed to this review by an outside party that, hopefully, allows victims an opportunity to have some healing and helps the Church and its faithful move forward from a place of truth and vigilance."

Attorney General Weiser and the Bishops have engaged an independent third-party to review the files of the three Dioceses related to the sexual abuse of minors, to interview witnesses as needed, and to prepare a public report on his findings. This is not a criminal investigation and we are not aware of any previously unreported criminal conduct. If the review discovers any criminal conduct, it will be immediately reported to the appropriate law enforcement authorities and included in the public report. The Attorney General's office will make resources available to district attorney offices as needed for them to evaluate any potentially criminal issues. This will be an independent review conducted by Robert Troyer, the former U.S. Attorney for Colorado, with the full voluntary cooperation of the three Dioceses.

Mr. Troyer's public report is expected to be released by the fall of 2019. To protect the privacy of victims, his report will not identify victims of abuse by name. The report will include:

- The names of Diocesan priests with substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of minors;

- Details of the substantiated allegations of abuse, including the assignments of abusive priests and the years during which abuse is alleged to have occurred;
- A review of the historic response of the three Dioceses to allegations of abuse; and,
- A review of the Dioceses' current policies and procedures for preventing abuse and responding to allegations of abuse.

Half of the fees for Mr. Troyer's work will be paid by the Dioceses. The other half will be paid by private donors identified by the Attorney General's office. At their request, the donors will remain anonymous.

Additionally, the three Colorado Dioceses will fund an independent, voluntary reparations program developed and administered by two nationally recognized claims administrations experts, [Mr. Kenneth R. Feinberg](#) and [Ms. Camille S. Biros](#). Mr. Feinberg and Ms. Biros will review individual cases, including cases that are barred by the statute of limitations, and make financial awards to victims who elect to participate.

The program will be wholly independent of the Colorado Dioceses. Under this program, each claim will be assessed by Mr. Feinberg and Ms. Biros, and an award of compensation will be made. While the victim is free to accept or reject the award rendered, the Colorado Dioceses are bound by the award. The Colorado Dioceses commit to pay all awards made to victims by Mr. Feinberg and Ms. Biros.

To ensure its independence, the program will be overseen by an independent committee chaired by former U.S. Senator Hank Brown.

In connection with the reparations program, a separate and independent victims' support service will be created with professionals who can discuss the reparations program, hear stories of victims/survivors, assist claimants in answering the questions about the reparations program, and provide support in submitting the necessary documentation to the program. After Mr. Feinberg's determination, the service will be available upon request by the claimant to help connect them with resources in their area for future care.

The Bishops and Attorney General Weiser agree that this program must accept claims through the public release of the report of the independent reviewer and a reasonable period of time thereafter. To allow Mr. Troyer to complete his work, the program will not start until later this year. Additional details regarding the program will be forthcoming.

"My colleagues around the country have responded to the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report in a variety of ways. Today, we are announcing a Colorado solution that is collaborative, enhances transparency, and provides victims access to support services and compensation. I want to thank the Bishops for working with my office to achieve these positive steps," continued Attorney General Weiser.

Archbishop Aquila, on behalf of the Colorado Bishops, said "The damage inflicted upon young people and their families by sexual abuse, especially when it's committed by a trusted person like a priest, is profound. While this process will certainly include painful moments and cannot ever fully restore what was lost, we pray that it will at least begin the healing process. We also acknowledge that the bright light of transparency needs to shine on the Church's history related to the sexual abuse of minors. With humility and repentance, we hope the programs announced today offer a path to healing for survivors and their families. We thank Attorney General Weiser and former Attorney General Coffman for their partnership in developing these important initiatives."

The Archdiocese of Denver includes Denver and northern Colorado and is led by Archbishop The Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L. The Diocese of Colorado Springs is headed by The Most Reverend Michael J. Sheridan, S.Th.D. The Most Reverend Stephen J. Berg leads the Diocese of Pueblo.

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