

Mr. Chairman and Committeemen,

My name is Helen Schoepner. I am a mother of a victim of sexual abuse by two Brothers of the Catholic Clergy.

This also makes me, my husband and daughter victims as well.

By this I mean that for 38 years we as a family couldn't understand our loved one, our son, who acted the way he has.

I would like to share some of the things that our family has endured with our son.

*no way is there enough time to tell you all*

When I got married 48 years ago, I agreed to raise my children in the Catholic Faith, and support the Catholic Church.

When our son was old enough to make his first Communion, he also became an altar server. This was very pleasing to my husband because he also was an altar server for many years as a young boy.

As time went by, we noticed our son was reluctant to take part in the things of the church. He didn't want his picture taken and he didn't want to serve Mass. He didn't want to go to church. We felt it was our duty to make him attend the church. As he got older he also had trouble sleeping. He would scream out in his sleep and walk in his sleep. He became very abusive toward his sister.

We felt something was wrong but we never could understand the problem. Our family doctor suggested we take him to the Cleveland Clinic.

At the Cleveland Clinic, they ran all kinds of tests on him and came up with nothing.

They knew something was causing these problems and they put him on a drug, called Phenobarbital, to help him sleep and settle him down. This happened around the time he was nine years old.

As time passed things didn't get much better. As a teenager, he was taking drugs and drinking alcohol. One time he stole a car and ran away from home. He was caught and put in jail in North Carolina. We had to drive to North Carolina and get a lawyer to get him out of

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jail. This cost us much money that we really didn't have.

When he was sixteen, we bought him a car for his birthday. I guess we were hoping this would make him happy and help him. He got drunk that night and totaled the car. He was going at a speed of 95 miles an hour. He survived without a scratch.

In 1978, he decided to get married. We hoped this would be a good thing for him. The girl he married was also on drugs, and of course, that marriage didn't last very long. They had to live with us for awhile, and that was bad.

After his divorce, he got a job at a local factory. He left drugs alone long enough to pass the drug test. Then, he bought a house. He decided to marry again. Again, the lady he married was on drugs and that didn't last too long either.

After the divorce, he sold his house and moved in with us. He couldn't get a job so he used his money to rent an apartment, and in a year's time he was broke. He squandered the \$35,000 he made on the sale. He took a number of small jobs that paid very little but quit or was let go from those.

On February 26th, 2004, he called me and threatened to kill me and my husband. We didn't know if he had lost his mind or was so drugged up he didn't know what he was doing. Since we knew he had a gun, we had no choice but to have him arrested.

At that time, we learned what had happened when he was nine years old. He had been molested by two Brothers of the Catholic Church. We were devastated. Never in our dreams did we think that he had been molested. Then things started to add up. We remembered things that happened that day and knew that he was telling the truth. We feel all the drinking and drugs during his youth were his attempts to medicate himself so he would not remember the molesting.

We immediately called our Parish Priest and told him. He in returned, notified the Bishop in our Diocese, which is Steubenville.

The Bishop wanted to meet with our son. At first, our son didn't want anything to do with any of them because he didn't trust them.

However we did set up a meeting on May 4, 2004 to meet with the Bishop. The Bishop said that he was too busy to keep the appointment.

He appointed a Msgr. Kemo to do the dirty work for him.

When my husband and son met with Msgr. Kemo, he was in agreement to get counseling for him. A few weeks later, we were contacted by a lady named Angelia Miracle.

She told me on the phone that she was working for the diocese and that she wanted to set up an appointment for us to see a counselor to evaluate us.

My son met with the counselor for three meetings and then I met with the counselor. The counselor told me, that after the first meeting with my son, that she noticed a big difference in him from one meeting to the next and that was only 2 days apart. I told her that if she saw a change in just 2 days, at the second counseling session, did she understand that he was stoned? She said she didn't know that. She told me that he had signed a paper so that she could tell me what was going on in her meeting with him.

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In the next meeting with me, she told me her evaluation. She thought he was a very difficult case for her and it was best for him to be admitted in a rehabilitation center in South Carolina. She asked me if I agreed to this and I said yes. He didn't have much of a choice. He was facing a jail sentence and a high fine for having a gun in his possession, plus a drug and an alcohol charge.

The counselor sent the letter to the diocese in Steubenville. The Bishop said they couldn't afford to pay out that kind of money for therapy .

That is when my faithful Catholic husband became very angry. He knew then that the Bishop was more interested in money than in our son's healing .

That is when we had to make a different arrangement for therapy for our son .

To date, our son is in therapy at the expense of you and me, the taxpayers.

Is this fair ? No, not to me or you.

The Catholic Institution should be held accountable for the Priests, Brothers, Bishops and even higher ups who have committed these sex crimes against our children.

This is why I am here today, to try and explain to all of you, just how important it is for you to pass this Bill 17. It can be a tool that is needed to make the Catholic Church and others be held accountable for the sex crimes against our children today and in the future . And perhaps it will be a deterrent for some would be sex offenders. Thank You!