**Safe Berks** Francine M. Scoboria

**Press Release/PSA** Communications Coordinator

9/4/2018 Cell: 484-269-7330

www.SafeBerks.org Office: 610-370-7812

 Email: FrancineS@SafeBerks.org

**Press Release/Public Service Announcement on Clergy Abuse**

The staff of Safe Berks stand with all survivors of child sexual abuse, and their families and friends. We stand with the more than 1,000 children identified as survivors in the PA Grand Jury Report released Aug. 14, 2018, after a two-year investigation into child sexual abuse by Catholic priests in Pennsylvania. The report included information about 301 Catholic priests identified as predators, who sexually abused children in Pennsylvania, including in Berks County.

The actual numbers of survivors are believed to be much higher. We stand with all survivors, including those who have chosen, at this point, not to report the abuse, and including those survivors who have passed away. The trauma and pain these abuses have caused innocent children, who looked at these priests as leaders to be trusted, is beyond any measure.

The Grand Jury Report also shines light on the cover-up by some members of the Catholic clergy, which protected many of these abusers, moving them to new parishes without warning their new congregations. Unfortunately, due to current criminal and civil statutes of limitations in child sex abuse cases, the Grand Jury Report only resulted in charges being filed against two priests.

Safe Berks is one of the organizations available to help survivors. Survivors can reach out to Safe Berks in several ways. Our free 24-hour crisis hotline number is: 844-789-SAFE, or text SAFE BERKS to 20121. Our office phone number is: 610-373-1206, and our website is: www.SafeBerks.org. Our services are free, confidential, and available in English and Spanish. Our services include trauma-informed counseling; legal advice and advocacy; a Safe House for individuals in danger due to domestic violence or sexual assault; and education and outreach to schools, colleges, churches and community groups.

**The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR) is another resource available to help survivors. PCAR offers counseling to survivors of rape or sexual assault. Survivors can call PCAR at:** 888-772-7227; or can visit the PCAR website at [www.pcar.org](http://www.pcar.org).

If you suspect child abuse, call ChildLine, the 24-hour statewide system operated by the PA Department of Human Services, toll free at 800-932-0313. In addition, if you or someone you know has been abused by a clergy member, the PA Attorney General’s Clergy Abuse Hotline is 888-538-8541.

Safe Berks thanks PA Attorney General Josh Shapiro, Rep. Mark Rozzi, and all others who worked on the Grand Jury investigation, and the 1,356-page report, for fighting for the rights of survivors of child sexual abuse.

These terrible crimes - the sexual abuse of innocent children and the cover-up of these abuses - are not limited to the Catholic Church, or to Penn State University, or to USA Gymnastics. Unfortunately, as a society, we have failed to protect our children. As a society, we have failed to hold institutions and individuals accountable for their criminal behavior.

The PA Grand Jury report is a first step forward.

The next step is the full elimination of the criminal statute of limitations and the extension of the civil statute in child sex abuse cases. On this issue, Safe Berks stands firmly with all survivors, their families and friends, and our colleagues at PCAR. As a society, we must work together to ensure the safety of all our children.

S**afe Berks** provides safe haven and support to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Our advocacy and education programs increase awareness of oppression and promote the prevention of domestic violence and sexual assault.