

**GOVERNOR'S STATEMENT UPON SIGNING
SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE BILL NO. 477**

Today I am signing Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 477, which significantly extends the statute of limitations for sexual abuse claims and creates a two-year filing window for sexual abuse claims that would otherwise be time-barred by the statute of limitations that goes into effect upon the bill's enactment. I recognize that this issue has evoked strong passions on both sides, as supporters of the bill rightly note that it greatly increases the ability of victims of sexual abuse to pursue justice through the court system. Opponents argue that by exposing religious and nonprofit organizations to potentially massive financial liabilities, the bill may have the unintended effect of inhibiting these organizations from providing the services that many vulnerable New Jerseyans rely on. I take these concerns seriously, but I cannot deny victims the ability to seek redress in court for sexual abuse that often leaves trauma lasting a lifetime. I am confident that our judicial system is the right forum to assess these claims fairly and impartially.

I am also signing the bill based on a commitment from the bill's sponsors to introduce and swiftly pass a bill that will correct an error in the section of the bill relating to the liability of public entities. This section inadvertently fails to establish a standard of proof for cases involving claims filed against public entities. If unaddressed, the lack of clarity would create uncertainty and likely lead to additional litigation. I have received assurances that the Legislature will correct this omission by clarifying that public entities should be held to the same standard of liability that is applied to religious and nonprofit organizations. Applying a different standard would be unjustified.

I thank the bill's sponsors for their commitment to tackling this issue, as well as the advocates on both sides for their activism and engagement. I continue to believe that vigorous debate based on policy -- even when dealing with sensitive and controversial issues -- makes our State's democracy stronger.

Date: May 13, 2019

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Matthew J. Platkin

Chief Counsel to the Governor