

My name is Marc Wennberg and I want to begin by thanking you for both considering this legislation, and also for taking time this morning to hear from the spokespersons of the Voices of St. Joseph's Orphanage Group. Before turning to their testimonies, I wanted to briefly share some information about the Inquiry. The St. Joseph's Orphanage Restorative Inquiry was launched in 2019 as an initiative of the Burlington Community Justice Center. The Inquiry is guided by an advisory team comprised of community stakeholders and restorative inquiry participants, and has received tremendous support from Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services, the Vermont Department of Children and Families, and the Attorney General's Office.

The Restorative Inquiry's mission is to understand and document the events of the Orphanage through the voices, experiences, and stories of those most impacted (the former children); and then facilitate inclusive processes of accountability, amends-making, learning, and change. The Inquiry is guided by a set of restorative principles and values that inform all of our work, including our primary obligation, which is to facilitate to the best of our abilities, the individual and collective goals of the former residents of the Orphanage. Changing the Statute of limitations on physical and emotional abuse is one of the group's core goals.

I would like to thank your committee along with the Vermont State Senate and many others for opening your hearts to the harm suffered by the former children of St. Joseph's Orphanage, acknowledging our collective responsibility as a community and state, and responding with this legislation as a first step in making amends. With your and others actions, you are demonstrating accountability and showing a restorative path forward. You are also providing an example to other institutions that are still reluctant to listen to the participants' painful stories and support their healing in a meaningful way.

Before closing, I wanted to let you know that the St. Joseph's Orphanage Writer's Group will be hosting a reading of excerpts from their work for legislators on Monday, May 17, at 1:00PM. I will be sending out an invitation to this Zoom event next week. I also want to personally acknowledge what a privilege it is for me to work with the Inquiry participants, who are a constant source of inspiration.

I will now turn it over now to Brenda Hannon, Gene Clark, and Michael Ryan, the spokespeople for the Voices of St. Joseph's Orphanage. Thank you.
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