

JAN 21 2022

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that sexual abuse of
2 children is extremely prevalent and that most children do not
3 immediately disclose the fact that they were abused. In the
4 United States, one in five girls and one in twenty boys is a
5 victim of child sexual abuse, and studies show that between
6 sixty and eighty per cent of survivors withhold disclosure. Of
7 those who delay disclosure until adulthood, the average delay
8 has been found to be approximately twenty years, with some
9 survivors delaying up to fifty years.

10 The legislature further finds that there are many reasons
11 children delay disclosing sexual abuse. These reasons range
12 from their particular stage of cognitive development, limited
13 capacity to understand what happened, inability to recognize the
14 sexual abuse as a cause of their dysfunctional adult life,
15 confusion about their feelings, or limited ability to adequately
16 express complaints, to the fact that a majority of survivors
17 know the perpetrator and may fear retaliation or harmful impacts



1 on their family or community. Moreover, when survivors disclose
2 abuse, they may also be subjected to disbelief, accusations,
3 silencing, and retraumatizing reactions by the recipients of the
4 disclosure.

5 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 6 (1) Expand the time period during which a civil action for
7 childhood sexual abuse may be initiated;
- 8 (2) Extend the period during which a victim of childhood
9 sexual abuse may bring an otherwise time-barred action
10 against the victim's abuser or a legal entity having a
11 duty of care;
- 12 (3) Allow victims to recover treble damages in certain
13 circumstances; and
- 14 (4) Allow a court to order the personnel of a legal entity
15 against whom a claim is brought to undergo training on
16 trauma-informed response to sexual abuse allegations.

17 SECTION 2. Section 657-1.8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
18 amended to read as follows:

19 "§657-1.8 Civil action arising from sexual offenses;
20 application; certificate of merit[-]; trauma-informed response.

21 (a) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, and except as



1 provided under subsection (b), no action for recovery of damages
2 based on physical, psychological, or other injury or condition
3 suffered by a victim when the victim was a minor, arising from
4 the sexual abuse of the ~~[minor]~~ victim by any person when the
5 victim was a minor, shall be commenced against the person who
6 committed the act of sexual abuse more than:

7 (1) ~~[Eight]~~ Fifty years after the eighteenth birthday of
8 the ~~[minor or the person who committed the act of~~
9 ~~sexual abuse attains the age of majority, whichever~~
10 ~~occurs later,]~~ victim; or

11 (2) ~~[Three]~~ Five years after the date the ~~[minor]~~ victim
12 discovers or reasonably should have discovered that
13 psychological injury or illness occurring after the
14 ~~[minor's]~~ victim's eighteenth birthday was caused by
15 the sexual abuse~~[,]~~;

16 whichever ~~[comes]~~ date occurs later.

17 A civil cause of action for the sexual abuse of a minor
18 shall be based upon sexual acts that constituted or would have
19 constituted a criminal offense under part V or VI of
20 chapter 707.



1 (b) For a period of ~~[eight]~~ twelve years after April 24,
2 2012, a victim of child sexual abuse ~~[that occurred in this~~
3 ~~State may file a claim]~~ who resided in the State at the time of
4 the abuse may file an otherwise time-barred claim in a circuit
5 court of this State against the person who committed the act of
6 sexual abuse if the victim is barred from filing a claim against
7 the victim's abuser due to the expiration of the applicable
8 civil statute of limitations that was in effect ~~[prior to]~~
9 before April 24, 2012.

10 A claim may also be brought under this subsection against a
11 legal entity if:

12 (1) The person who committed the act of sexual abuse
13 against the victim was employed by an institution,
14 agency, firm, business, corporation, or other public
15 or private legal entity domiciled within the State
16 that owed a duty of care to the victim; or

17 (2) The person who committed the act of sexual abuse and
18 the victim were engaged in an activity over which the
19 legal entity had a degree of responsibility or
20 control.



1 Damages against the legal entity shall be awarded under
2 this subsection only if there is a finding of gross negligence
3 on the part of the legal entity[-]; provided that a victim may
4 recover up to treble damages, unless prohibited by another law,
5 if the victim proves that the victim's sexual abuse was the
6 result of the legal entity's reckless disregard of evidence
7 relating to a prior incident of sexual abuse of a minor. For
8 purposes of this subsection, a legal entity's reckless disregard
9 of evidence relating to a prior incident of sexual abuse of a
10 minor shall include the legal entity's failure to report the
11 prior incident to law enforcement authorities as required by
12 law.

13 (c) A defendant against whom a civil action is commenced
14 may recover attorney's fees if the court determines that a false
15 accusation was made with no basis in fact and with malicious
16 intent. A verdict in favor of the defendant shall not be the
17 sole basis for a determination that an accusation had no basis
18 in fact and was made with malicious intent. The court shall
19 make an independent finding of an improper motive [~~prior to~~]
20 before awarding attorney's fees under this section.



1 (d) In any civil action filed pursuant to subsection (a)
2 or (b), a certificate of merit shall be filed by the attorney
3 for the plaintiff, and shall be [sealed] electronically filed
4 under seal and remain confidential. The certificate of merit
5 shall include a notarized statement by a:

6 (1) Psychologist licensed pursuant to chapter 465;

7 (2) Marriage and family therapist licensed pursuant to
8 chapter 451J;

9 (3) Mental health counselor licensed pursuant to chapter
10 453D; or

11 (4) Clinical social worker licensed pursuant to chapter
12 467E;

13 who is knowledgeable in the relevant facts and issues involved
14 in the action, and who is not a party to the action.

15 The notarized statement included in the certificate of
16 merit shall set forth in reasonable detail the facts and
17 opinions relied upon to conclude that there is a reasonable
18 basis to believe that the plaintiff was subject to one or more
19 acts that would result in an injury or condition specified in
20 [†]subsection[†] (a).



1 (e) With respect to a legal entity against whom a claim is
2 brought pursuant to subsection (b), a plaintiff may request, and
3 a court may order, the personnel of the legal entity to undergo
4 training on trauma-informed response to allegations of sexual
5 abuse. As used in this subsection, "trauma-informed response"
6 may include:

7 (1) Fully integrating research about the effects and
8 impacts of trauma into policies, procedures, and
9 practices;

10 (2) Understanding the ways in which stress and trauma may
11 affect attention, cognition, behavior, and memory
12 processes;

13 (3) Creating an environment that is safe, non-judgmental,
14 and free of gratuitous re-triggering; and

15 (4) Listening to and documenting victims' statements
16 without judgment."

17 SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
18 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.



1 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval,
2 and shall apply retroactively to April 24, 2020.

3

INTRODUCED BY: 



Report Title:

Sexual Abuse of Minors; Civil Action; Statute of Limitations; Damages; Trauma-Informed Response

Description:

Expands the time period by which a civil action for childhood sexual abuse may be initiated. Extends the period during which a victim of childhood sexual abuse may bring an otherwise time-barred action against the victim's abuser or a legal entity having a duty of care. Allows recovery of treble damages in certain circumstances. Provides for training on trauma-informed response. Applies retroactively to 4/24/2020.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

