

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 24, 2012

The Honorable Lamar Smith, Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith:

I am writing concerning one of the many issues related to the child sexual abuse committed by Jerry Sandusky that has come to light in recent months. This case represents a complete failure of the systems supposedly in place to protect children from monsters such as Mr. Sandusky. Like many parents across the country, I have been following this case with ever-increasing horror.

Now that the report by Louis Freeh of Penn State University's Special Investigations Task Force investigation has been released and sanctions by the NCAA have been announced, we have an obligation to ensure that the legitimate public policy questions raised by this tragedy do not go unaddressed. I respectfully request that you hold hearings to examine the issues surrounding the Penn State scandal and child sex abuse including mandatory reporting requirements, statute of limitations and state and federal penalties both for the abusers and those that enable them.

Regardless of criminal or civil liability, it is clear that every adult involved in this decades-long coverup failed in his or her fundamental moral duty to protect children. The Freeh report indicates that members of the Penn State staff repeatedly, over a decade or more, chose not to take allegations of child sex abuse to the authorities in spite of increasing red flags related to Mr. Sandusky's behavior. If mandatory reporting had been in place for all adults in this situation as well as policies encouraging staff to come forward with reasonable suspicions, it is likely that Mr. Sandusky would not have been in a position to prey on children for so long. The lifelong scars that will be borne by the survivors of Mr. Sandusky's crimes should remind us all about the true cost of inaction. It is my hope that the Committee will take up the question of reporting responsibility for child sex crimes in light of the damning picture painted by the Freeh report in the Sandusky case.

In addition, in light of recent news reports that there may be victims of Mr. Sandusky dating back to the early 1970s when he first began to work at Penn State,¹ Congress must examine how state statutes of limitations on child sexual abuse can inhibit prosecution and reporting of these heinous crimes. While it is my understanding that in Pennsylvania the statute of limitations on bringing child sex abuse does not expire until the victim reaches 50 years of age, there are too many states that still place unrealistic limitations on child victims, who may take years or decades before they are able to speak up about their abuse.

Mr. Chairman, one of the most repugnant revelations from the Freeh report is that so many children were repeatedly victimized by Mr. Sandusky while a number of individuals who could have done something chose not to act. Given that the issue of child sexual abuse is too often ignored or swept under the rug, we must examine the shortcomings in our legal system that fail to adequately compel adults to take action. If there is any chance that something good can come out of this terrible tragedy, we must focus the national attention on this case to the issue of child sex abuse and closely examine why this abuse uninterrupted continued at Penn State.

According to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are more than 42 million adult survivors of child sexual abuse. This is the number of children we have failed.

We must take action on behalf of the millions of victims to ensure that adults never again fail to respond to allegations of child sexual abuse. I commend you for the work you have already done on behalf of child victims, and I sincerely hope that the House Judiciary Committee will take up this important examination. Thank you as always for your work and your thoughtful consideration of my request.

Sincerely,



Ted Deutch

Cc: The Honorable John Conyers Jr., Ranking Member, House Committee on the Judiciary

¹ http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-07-16/news/sns-rt-us-crime-sanduskybre86f0p0-20120716_1_jerry-sandusky-sandusky-case-sandusky-scandal and http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2012/07/jerry_sandusky_case_three_men.html