

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224  
USA

11<sup>th</sup> January 2017

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the global mental health charity, The Shaw Mind Foundation, with regards to S809 – The Omnibus Child Victims Act.

Victims of child sexual abuse often suffer from a wide range of mental health illnesses as a direct consequence of the abuse endured by the hands of the perpetrator. Even though recovery from certain mental illnesses is possible with timely intervention and correct therapy (which many people don't receive), the deep hidden scars caused by sexual abuse during childhood many a time impact on the sufferer's life during their adult years.

### **Why we fully support S809 – The Omnibus Child Victims Act**

Child sexual abuse is rife around the globe. Let's look at some statistics<sup>1</sup> in relation to the US and more specifically New York State;

- 1) 45 million people in the US are affected by sexual abuse.
- 2) 20% of the people you meet on an everyday basis will have been sexually abused.
- 3) Every year, more than 43,000 children in New York State are harmed by sexual abuse.
- 4) 90% of child sex abusers are still on New York's Streets, not on sex offender registries. These are rapists walking free protected by New York State Laws.
- 5) 21 years is the average amount of time that survivors of child sexual abuse need before they can disclose and talk about what they suffered as a child.
- 6) 5 years is the maximum time that New York State allows for any disclosure of child sexual abuse by the victim due to the archaic and very unfair Statute of Limitations on the crime.

S809, The Omnibus Child Victims Act, will erase New York's Statute of Limitations for sufferers of child sexual abuse in both the criminal and civil courts.

### **PTSD and child sexual abuse**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.protectnykids.org/>

Abuse from parents, caregivers, extended family members or others unfortunately results in an enormous childhood trauma and can appear in many forms including sexual abuse. When abuse occurs, a child is not psychologically equipped to process their emotions and the feelings of the event; leading events to become overwhelming and more traumatic.

Children are often also in unidirectional power relationships with those who are abusing them, as they are usually an adult seen as having authority, and as such events are more unescapable and the victim is made to feel powerless.

These feelings of being trapped and stressed, leading to an overwhelmed coping response, is the definition of trauma. This fear, helplessness and powerlessness are all features that mean PTSD is more likely to occur.

Statistics show;<sup>2</sup>

- 1) 73% of male adolescent rape victims developed PTSD
- 2) 34% of children experiencing sexual abuse develop PTSD
- 3) 58% of children experiencing both physical and sexual abuse developed PTSD.

The type of abuse and the frequency that the abuse or trauma is experienced can also have a large impact on the chances of PTSD developing. It has been found that the more severe the trauma is, the greater the chances of PTSD development.

This means that events involving a greater perceived threat and physical harm, **such as child abuse and rape**, are often more likely to lead to PTSD, as is more long term sustained abuse.

### **Now is the time for action and pass this Act**

S809, The Omnibus Child Victims Act, needs passing to protect children, reduce any associated mental illnesses associated with the abuse they suffer at the hands of the rapists and abusers who ultimately are protected by the New York's Statute of Limitations.

Kind regards,



**Adam Shaw**  
**CEO and founder, The Shaw Mind Foundation**

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<sup>2</sup> <http://shawmindfoundation.org/free-guides/> Children and PTSD