

April 27, 2023

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul
Wisconsin Department of Justice
P.O. Box 7857
Madison, WI 53707-7857
AND
opengov@widoj.gov

Re: Wisconsin Open Records Law and the Department of Justice “Clergy and Faith Leader Abuse Initiative”

Dear Attorney General Kaul,

I am a resident of Wisconsin, a Priest of the Catholic Archdiocese of Milwaukee, and an advocate for victims/survivors of sexual abuse. I am contacting you as an individual citizen, not as a representative of any group or organization.

Background

On April 27, 2021, you announced the “Statewide inquiry into Clergy and Faith Leader Abuse”. By doing so, you created hope for many people that truth would be revealed so that justice could be served.

On p.2 of the Statement, you declared that “the initiative also will provide a confidential means for people to report what they know about the response to or concealment of abuse by clergy and faith leaders.” In addition and also on p. 2, you said the “DOJ will also be requesting documents and information from dioceses and religious orders in Wisconsin.” Both announcements strengthened the hope you were creating.

<https://www.doj.state.wi.us/news-releases/ag-kaul-announces-statewide-inquiry-clergy-and-faith-leader-abuse>

Yes, I say again, you created hope. But now, two years later, you and the DOJ are flirting with the possibility of shattering that hope because those two critical commitments you made in 2021 are not addressed in the two-year anniversary update provided by the DOJ on April 17, 2023.

<https://www.doj.state.wi.us/news-releases/attorney-general-kaul-releases-update-advace-two-year-anniversary-clergy-and-faith-leader-abuse-initiative>

Why was reporting on these two commitments ignored in the update?

I am particularly interested in knowing if leaders of the Catholic Church have interfered with this DOJ inquiry or initiative because such interference, if it exists, would, in my opinion, violate the Catholic Church law *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (You are the light of the world), Art. 1, §1 (b), and should be addressed within the Catholic Church’s legal system.

My Request

Consequently, pursuant to Wisconsin Statute §19.31 et seq. (Wisconsin Open Records Law), I request:

1. All correspondence from the DOJ to Catholic Church Leaders in Wisconsin and from Catholic Church Leaders in Wisconsin to the DOJ from April 27, 2021 to the current day. The “correspondence” should include, but not be limited to, letters, emails, personal notes, and minutes of meetings and telephone conversations. “Leaders” should include, but not be limited to, bishops, priests, deacons, lay employees and volunteers, and outside attorneys, as well as the major superiors of Catholic men and women religious orders operating within Wisconsin.
2. All communication, properly redacted as appropriate, from people who contacted the DOJ regarding the response to or concealment of abuse by clergy and faith leaders.
3. A copy of internal communication within the DOJ regarding conclusions having been reached and/or possible recommendations that the DOJ might make to the Wisconsin State Legislature, to the faith communities involved in the inquiry or initiative, and to the people of Wisconsin.
4. Financial records regarding the cost of the inquiry or initiative, the number of DOJ employees and outside consultants involved, the total labor cost and other expenses charged to the inquiry or initiative.
5. All DOJ instruction materials that explain the way this inquiry or initiative is being, or is expected to be, conducted.

As might be appropriate, please forward this request to the proper custodian and let me know that person’s name and contact information.

If you choose to deny this request, please respond with a written explanation of the denial, including references to applicable statutory exemptions relied upon.

If any of these records are available through electronic media (preferred), they may be emailed to me at connell.jim951@gmail.com

If I can provide any clarification that will help expedite your attention to my request, please contact me at 414-940-8054.

Thank you for your cooperation in this important matter.

Sincerely yours,

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