



## Albany, NY - Abuse Legislation Gains Backing From Prominent African-American Clergy

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[file photo] Rev. Anthony Evans, President of the National Black Church Initiative interviewed by the Media

Albany, NY - The National Organization for Women and a prominent group of African-American clergy threw their support Monday behind a controversial bill that would temporarily lift the statute of limitations on lawsuits alleging sexual abuse of children.

The legislation sponsored by Assemb. Margaret M. Markey (D-Maspeth) and State Sen. Thomas Duane (D- Manhattan), would give people alleging abuse as children a special one-year window to file suit in civil court, regardless of how long ago the abuse occurred. The statute of limitations on future cases

also would be extended.

The bill is opposed by powerful interests, including the Catholic Church, which has called it discriminatory and likely to spur dioceses to file for bankruptcy.

The New York chapter of NOW backs the Markey bill because one-in-four women are sexually abused as children and often find themselves in abusive relationships as adults. "This legislation is about protecting children, helping victims and holding offenders accountable ... We must halt the ability of predators and their enablers from using the technicality of the statute of limitations to block child-sex abuse cases," said chapter president Marcia Pappas.

Her comments came toward the end of an hour-long news conference in the capital on Tuesday staged by Markey and Duane. They were surrounded by three dozen abuse victims and their advocates.

"Abuse against children is violence," said the Rev. Anthony Evans, president of the 34,000-member National Black Church Initiative. "I don't represent a god who condones violence. It is a shame we have to fight against the [Catholic] church in this. It breaks my heart ... but we will stand with you," he added, referring to sex abuse victims.

Markey said she was "cautiously optimistic" that her bill would be approved by both houses of the legislature and signed into law by Gov. David A. Paterson, though he has said he supports rival legislation. The Markey bill has passed the Assembly three times previously only to die in the then-Republican-controlled Senate

