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**Governor Corbett, General Assembly Urged to Create a Child Protection and Accountability Task Force**

*Call to action originally issued in April renewed in the wake of the PSU child abuse scandal*

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**November 14<sup>th</sup>** - We, the undersigned, are deeply pained by the shocking allegations by at least eight children that they were sexually assaulted by a former Penn State University football coach.

We are equally disturbed by the fact that this serial abuse against children may have been widely known but not reported, even when it should have been. Also quite troubling is the fact that Pennsylvania’s Child Protective Services Law – pre and post 2006 – did and does not go far enough to protect child victims like these.

In April, we joined together calling on Governor Tom Corbett and leaders of the General Assembly to create a Child Protection and Accountability Task Force.

We envisioned then, and with even greater urgency now, an objective and intentional effort that would bring together representatives of the Corbett Administration, the Pennsylvania Senate, Pennsylvania House of Representatives, and a panel of experts to examine and make timely recommendations about the very foundation of this state’s child protection efforts.

This Task Force would be directed to objectively examine core issues related to the defining, reporting and investigating of child abuse, as well as whether the response to child abuse is child-centered, with safety and well-being being paramount.

We renewed our call at an August hearing of the Senate Aging and Youth Committee.

It is our understanding that the Pennsylvania Senate, as a result of the leadership of Senator Kim Ward, is committed to a bipartisan review of these issues. We applaud her leadership and the Senate’s commitment to prioritize these important child protection issues.

Pennsylvania is a statistical outlier in the investigation and determination of child abuse, i.e., it investigates child abuse 8.3 per 1,000 children versus 40.3 per 1,000 children nationally, and then determines a child is a victim of child abuse 1.4 per 1,000 children versus 9.3 per 1,000 nationally.

As the nation was tragically reminded this past week, too often – despite a report of child abuse and investigation by a children and youth agency – Pennsylvania’s children remain exposed to repeated physical or sexual injury or a pattern of harm.

We believe that this past week’s Grand Jury Presentment reinforces the legitimacy of, and the need for, objective bipartisan and bi-cameral review of our state’s core front-end child welfare laws and practices.

We believe strengthened leadership within our Commonwealth is urgently needed to better protect our children. The Task Force we have called for is the first step in securing that leadership.

We stand ready and willing to work with Governor Corbett and his administration and the General Assembly to ensure that Pennsylvania becomes a national leader in how it promotes and measures the safety, well-being and permanency of our children.

Individuals/organizations endorsing this statement and a call for a Child Protection and Accountability Task Force include:

**A Child’s Place at Mercy –Allegheny County Children’s Advocacy Center**

Mary Carrasco, MD, MPH, FAAP, Director  
Joan Mills, Manager

**ACCESS-York/Victim Assistance Center Programs of the YWCA-York**

Rick Azzaro LCSW, Chief Services Officer

**Adams County Children's Advocacy Center**  
Joddie Walker, Executive Director

**Alice Paul House**  
Lou Ann Williams, Executive Director

**American Academy of Pediatrics - PA Chapter**  
Jamie Calabrese, MD, FAAP, President  
Allen Nussbaum, MD, FAAP, Vice President  
Suzanne Yunghans, Executive Director  
David Turkewitz, MD, FAAP - Immediate Past President

**CASA of Philadelphia County**  
Wendy Aguirre, MSW, Executive Director

**Center for the Prevention of School-Aged Violence at Drexel University**  
Charles A. Williams III, PhD, Director

**Central Susquehanna Valley Children's Advocacy Center**  
Dr. Pat Bruno, M.D., FAAP, Medical Director

**Child Watch of Pittsburgh**  
Christopher P. Smith, Executive Director

**Children's Advocacy Center of Lawrence County**  
Sue Ascione, Executive Director

**Children's Advocacy Center of Northeastern Pennsylvania**  
MaryAnn LaPorta, Executive Director

**Children's Alliance Center of Berks County**  
April Reed Schmehl, Vice President

**Children's Coalition of the Lehigh Valley**  
John Reynolds, Chair

**Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC**  
Rachel P. Berger, MD, MPH, Child Advocacy Center  
Janet Squires, MD, Child Advocacy Center

**City Church York**  
Rev. Aaron Anderson, Pastor

**Crime Victim Center of Erie County, Inc.**  
Paul A. Lukach, Executive Director

**Dauphin County Victim Witness Assistance**  
Jennifer Storm, Executive Director  
Vikki Palmer, Child Abuse Advocate

**Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania**  
Sallie Lynagh, Children's Project

**Family Design Resources**  
Brenda Lawrence, Executive Director

**Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research**  
Debra Schilling Wolfe, Executive Director

**Fight Crime: Invest in Kids – Pennsylvania**  
Bruce Clash, State Director

**Former PA Victim Advocate**  
Mary Achilles

**HAVIN (Helping All Victims in Need)**  
Jo Ellen Bowman, MSW, LSW, Executive Director

**Juvenile Law Center**  
Robert Schwartz, Executive Director

**KidsVoice**  
Scott Hollander, Executive Director  
Jen Staley, Program & Policy Coordinator

**Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania**  
The Rev. Amy Reumann, Director

**Lutheran Congregational Services, Inc.**  
The Rev. Dr. Dennis S. Ritter, Executive Director

**Luzerne County Office of Human Services**  
Joe DeVizia, Director

**Maternity Care Coalition**  
JoAnne Fischer, Executive Director

**Mental Health Association in Pennsylvania**  
Sue Walther, Executive Director

**Mission Kids Child Advocacy Center of Montgomery County**  
Abbie Newman, Executive Director

**National Association of Social Workers – PA Chapter**  
Jenna Mehnert, Executive Director

**Network of Victim Assistance (Bucks County)**  
Barbara Clark, Executive Director

**Nurse-Family Partnership National Service Office**  
Tara Dechert, Program Developer

**PathWays PA**  
Carol Goertzel, CEO

**Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence**  
Peg Dierkers, Executive Director

**Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape**  
Delilah Rumburg, CEO

**Pennsylvania Community Providers Association**  
George Kimes, Executive Director  
Connell O'Brien, Policy Specialist

**Pennsylvania Council of Churches**  
The Rev. Sandra L. Strauss, Director of Public Advocacy

**Pennsylvania Court Appointed Special Advocates**

Dennis Hockensmith, Executive Director

**Philadelphia Children's Alliance**

Chris Kirchner, MSW, Executive Director

**Pressley Ridge**

Tammy Relken, Senior Director

**Prevent Child Abuse PA**

Teresa Olsen, Director

**Protect Our Children Committee**

Cathleen Palm, Executive Director

**Public Citizens for Children and Youth**

Shelly Yanoff, Executive Director

**SEIU Local 668**

Kathy Jellison, President

**St. Christopher's Hospital for Children**

Carolyn Jackson, CEO

Maria D. McColgan, M.D., Medical Director, Child Protection Program

**Sexual Assault Resource and Counseling Center**

Jenny Murphy-Shifflet, President/CEO

**Strategic Health Institute**

Wanda D. Filer, MD, MBA

**Support Center for Child Advocates**

Frank Cervone, Executive Director

**York County Children's Advocacy Center**

Deborah Harrison, Executive Director

**York County Cribs for Kids Program**

Michael H. Goodstein, MD, FAAP, Director (and Attending Neonatologist at York Hospital)

**Individuals**

Deb Beck (Dauphin County)

Beth Docherty (Allegheny County)

Dr. Paula George (Berks County)

Patti Gilbert (Cumberland County)

The Rev. Karl Jones (Schuylkill County)

Ruth Kolb (Allegheny County)

Colleen Masi (Erie County)

Sheldon Schwartz (Franklin County)

Patricia Sonne (Northampton County)

Gary Shuey (Cumberland County)

Lucy Johnston-Walsh (Cumberland County)

Clay Yeager (York County)

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