

A statement from the SBC Executive Committee Officers:

The SBC Executive Committee remains wholly committed to engaging with survivors and working toward eradicating sexual abuse from Southern Baptist churches, institutions, and entities, and to bringing about meaningful abuse reform across the SBC. The SBC Executive Committee joined a brief making legal arguments to the Supreme Court of Kentucky on a discrete legal issue that has a direct impact on the Committee's and Convention's legal and fiduciary interests. The SBC Executive Committee must continue to defend itself, and its interests, within the judicial system as appropriate. These goals (eradicating sexual abuse and legally defending itself) are not mutually exclusive. While there are issues about which we will not agree, we remain steadfast in our desire to fulfill the will of the messengers and to implement meaningful sexual abuse reform within the Southern Baptist Convention. Tension and disagreement on one matter are not reasons to abandon the broader effort to eradicate sexual abuse from all Southern Baptist churches.

Mindful of the disagreements here, and the response of the survivor community, the SBC Executive Committee is compelled to offer context and clarification regarding its joinder of the amicus brief. The SBC Executive Committee and SBC are currently facing multiple lawsuits in Kentucky. On the advice of legal counsel, and only in response to their request, the Convention and the SBC Executive Committee joined with other parties in the brief at issue solely to focus the court on a discrete legal issue that has significant impact on pending and potential future litigation in the state of Kentucky, namely, whether or not the Kentucky legislature intended the extension of the statute of limitations to apply to non-offender third parties.

We recognize and respect survivors' strong feelings, opinions, and statements on this issue and will continue to work with them as reform efforts move forward. We understand the strong response this issue has evoked. We can disagree and have meaningful discussions. We do, however, want to be clear about the brief and the limited position it advocates for. The amicus brief does not take a position on the underlying litigation, and it is not a lobbying effort to restrict statutes of limitation. Rather it urges the court to apply the current Kentucky statute as it was drafted and intended. As the brief unequivocally states, the SBC Executive Committee believes that public policy in favor of ensuring relief and justice for victims of childhood sexual abuse is commendable. The argument here is limited specifically to non-offending third parties. The statutory and constitutional due process concerns explained in the brief do not negate empathy for survivors of sexual abuse nor the reform efforts that are underway.

Not one SBC Executive Committee trustee was involved in the decision to join this amicus brief. Counsel for the SBC Executive Committee reviewed the brief and recommended it be joined. The filing of this amicus brief, and the response to it, have prompted the current SBC Executive Committee trustees to reevaluate how legal filings will be approved and considered in the future. We will be diligent in addressing those concerns.

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