



## Diocese of Manchester

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### BISHOP MCCORMACK REAFFIRMS CATHOLIC CHURCH'S CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

(MANCHESTER, NH) Bishop John B. McCormack said he is grateful that the assessment released by the Attorney General's office today confirms that the Catholic Church in New Hampshire is committed to child safety and that its safe environment programs are effective. He also said that Diocesan personnel will continue to follow the now well-established safe environment policies, procedures, and programs in dealing with matters pertaining to the safety of minors.

The announcement came following the release of the fourth and final assessment of the Diocesan Safe Environment Program by the national accounting firm of KPMG on behalf of the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office. The review by KPMG calls the Diocese's child safety efforts a "significant accomplishment," and says the Diocese's Safe Environment Program "has become a deliberate and strategic mechanism for the screening and training of Diocesan personnel, reporting of allegations and ultimately, for the protection of minors."

Attorney General Kelly Ayotte commented on the report in a letter released from her office today, saying, "The progress and positive changes made over these last four years by the Diocese, and in particular in the last two years, is remarkable and commendable. It gives me confidence that the Diocese will proceed into the future with a strong commitment to sustain the program that has now been developed and implemented to protect children from sexual abuse."

In response to the assessment and Attorney General Ayotte's letter, Bishop McCormack said, "I am grateful to Attorney General Kelly Ayotte, her staff, and the KPMG auditors for their supportive expressions of our work and their recommendations regarding enhancements to our safe environment policies and programs. I also thank the clergy, religious, school administrators, teachers, and the thousands of paid and volunteer lay ministers in our Diocese who work to keep safe the children and young people in our care. I am particularly indebted to the lay members of the Diocesan Review Board who advise and assist me in these efforts.

"We know full well that sexual abuse of children inflicts great harm upon them. They are fragile innocent victims. We also know how it affects their families, the Church, and our wider society. We are sorry, sad, and ashamed that these crimes occurred in our Church. We pray for everyone whose lives have

been affected by abuse. We offer them our support and compassion and promise to do all we can to prevent abuse in the future. Our earnest desire to protect children and youth is shared by many others in our Church and our state. Maintaining a safe environment for everyone is part of who we are as a Church. The hard work, though, does not end with the final assessment by the state. We remain committed to monitor and improve our safe environment policies, programs, and practices when needed.”

The fourth and final KPMG assessment included visits and interviews with numerous Diocesan personnel, two parishes, two schools, and a Diocesan summer camp.

The Diocesan Delegate for Ministerial Conduct, Rev. Edward J. Arsenault, said that “our Safe Environment Program has and will continue to undergo reviews by both the Diocesan Review Board and an auditing firm that conducts reviews of child safety programs and practices in dioceses throughout the United States on behalf of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and the laity on the National Review Board. Such reports have and will continue to be published by Bishop McCormack. The staff positions, policies, and protocols that we have updated or established since 2002 ensure the sustainability of our safe environment efforts.”

Fr. Arsenault said the Diocese is in the process of carefully reviewing the full report. Bishop McCormack has responded to Attorney General Ayotte’s letter and will provide a 4<sup>th</sup> responsive action plan to her office within 18 days in accordance with her request.

For more information on Diocesan efforts to promote child safety, please visit [www.catholicnh.org/child-safety](http://www.catholicnh.org/child-safety).

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*The Diocese of Manchester is the Roman Catholic Church of New Hampshire, serving the needs of more than 300,000 Catholics. For more information, please visit [www.catholicnh.org](http://www.catholicnh.org).*