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JOSH SHAPIRO
ATTORNEY GENERAL

July 25, 2018

His Holiness, Pope Francis
Apostolic Palace
00120 Vatican City

Your Holiness:

I had the pleasure of officially welcoming you to St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania as you arrived for the World Meeting of Families on September 27, 2015. It was a high honor to receive greetings and blessings from you. I am a great admirer of you and your work—especially your commitment to fighting for the defenseless.

It was at the Seminary, shortly after our exchange, that you chose to meet with a group of survivors of sexual abuse. According to official Vatican records, in that meeting you expressed sorrow, sadness and apologies to the victims and stated that you were “profoundly sorry that your innocence was violated by those who you trusted.” You went on to express remorse that the Church failed to hear and believe them for so long but that now you, the Holy Father, “hears and believes you”. You pledged to “follow the path of truth wherever it may lead. Clergy and bishops will be held accountable when they abuse or fail to protect children.” I was moved by your words, your compassion and your commitment.

Sadly, some of the clergy leading the church in Pennsylvania have failed to heed your words. A comprehensive investigation by the Office of Attorney General found widespread sexual abuse of children and a systemic coverup by leaders of the Catholic Church. Last month, I planned to release the findings of our investigation. As I prepared to do so, anonymous petitioners implicated in this report went to court to stop me and silence the victims notwithstanding the fact that the bishops in Pennsylvania pledged publicly to not stand in the way of the truth. Credible reports indicate that at least two leaders of the Catholic Church in Pennsylvania—while not directly challenging the release of this report in court—are behind these efforts to silence the victims and avoid accountability.

Your Holiness, I respectfully request that you direct church leaders to follow the path you charted at the Seminary in 2015 and abandon their destructive efforts to silence the survivors. Instead, please call on them to “follow the path of truth” you laid out and permit the healing process to begin. I thank you for your consideration and concern.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Josh Shapiro".

JOSH SHAPIRO