I grew up in Nassau County, Long Island, New York. At a very young age and for almost six years I was repeatedly molested and sexually assaulted. My abuser was not a priest, nor a rabbi, nor a teacher. In fact, my abuser was not connected to any institution, religious or otherwise. My abuser was a family member.

As a victim of sexual abuse by a family member, deeper more emotionally intricate boundaries were violated. Since it occurred in the home, there was no safe place to turn. I experienced a repeated nightmare as a child – in my dream after I told my mother my home would burn down. Silence became the walls of the hole I sank into for some small semblance of safety. I could not tell my ugly secret to my parents, my teachers or any adult I was told I could trust.

Statistics clearly suggest that over 56% of child sexual assault victims are abused by family members. Some studies suggest the number is even higher. It took me years, well into my adulthood, to recognize that there was a slow menacing bleed in me. And even more time to muster up the courage to look at and acknowledge my ugly wound. This painful, afraid and humiliated silence caged me and allowed my perpetrator to hide behind New York’s archaic statute of limitations. It took me years to find the courage to tell anyone.

The Child Victims Act is not about the bank account of the Catholic Church, or any other religious institution. The Child Victims Act is about giving victims, like me, a voice; the voice of a little girl who was repeatedly silenced and muffled by fear, embarrassment, shame and unspeakable pain, and a bill that will expose countless sexual predators.

Please support the Child Victims Act. Give victims a voice, expose sexual perpetrators, and protect children from these hidden dangers.

Thank you.