

House Bill 1479

By: Representatives Sanchez of the 42nd, Evans of the 57th, Campbell of the 35th, Holcomb of the 101st, Santos of the 117th, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 2 of Chapter 3 of Title 9 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
2 relating to specific periods of limitation, so as to extend the statute of limitations for certain
3 alleged acts by clergy members; to provide for liability for certain entities; to provide for the
4 extension of certain claims; to provide for definitions; to provide for related matters; to
5 provide a short title; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 This Act shall be known and may be cited as "Hayle's Law."

9 **SECTION 2.**

10 Article 2 of Chapter 3 of Title 9 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
11 specific periods of limitation, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

12 "9-3-33.2.

13 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

14 (1) 'Clergy member' means any person, whether licensed or unlicensed, who represents
15 himself or herself as a minister, pastor, priest, rabbi, imam, or other spiritual leader of an

16 organization claiming to be a faith based organization in this state or any other state, or
17 any person who provides or purports to provide spiritual guidance, pastoral counseling,
18 religious instruction, or spiritual direction to another person in a relationship of trust,
19 confidence, or dependency.

20 (2) 'Entity' means an institution, agency, firm, business, corporation, or other public or
21 private legal entity.

22 (3) 'Pastoral counseling or spiritual authority relationship' means a relationship in which
23 a clergy member provides spiritual guidance, pastoral care, religious instruction,
24 confession, mentoring, or emotional or spiritual support in circumstances where a
25 reasonable person would view the clergy member as exercising influence, trust, or
26 authority over another person's spiritual, emotional, or personal well-being.

27 (b)(1) Any civil action for recovery of damages suffered as a result of sexual assault,
28 sexual battery, or improper sexual conduct committed by a clergy member or arising from
29 pastoral counseling or spiritual authority relationship against the plaintiff when the
30 plaintiff is 18 years of age or older shall be commenced the later of:

31 (A) Within 15 years of the alleged conduct; or

32 (B) Within five years from the date that the plaintiff knew or had reason to know of
33 such acts and that such abuse resulted in injury to the plaintiff as established by
34 competent medical or psychological evidence.

35 (2) When the plaintiff's civil action is filed within five years from the date that the
36 plaintiff knew or had reason to know of such acts and that such acts resulted in injury to
37 the plaintiff, the court shall determine admissible evidence in a pretrial finding when the
38 discovery of the alleged acts occurred. The pretrial finding required pursuant to this
39 paragraph shall be made within six months of the filing of the civil action.

40 (c) If a civil action for recovery of damages is commenced and the clergy member was a
41 volunteer or employee of an entity that owed a duty of care to the plaintiff, or the clergy
42 member and the plaintiff were engaged in activity over which such entity had control, a

43 plaintiff is also entitled to recover damages against such entity for claims related to the
44 alleged acts, including, but not limited to, negligent hiring, negligent supervision, negligent
45 retention, failure to warn, and concealment.

46 (d) Any claims arising on or before June 30, 2026, that have been barred solely due to the
47 statute of limitations expiring may be brought within two years of July 1, 2026."

48 **SECTION 3.**

49 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.