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**Diocese of Erie responds to Garabedian news conference**

As Attorney Mitchell Garabedian announced during a news conference this morning, the Diocese of Erie has settled all legal claims brought by a victim of David L. Poulson, the former priest who is now serving time for his crimes at SCI Camp Hill near Harrisburg. The Diocese of Erie stands behind the settlement in the interests of justice and recognizes the harms suffered by this victim. However, Mr. Garabedian repeatedly misspoke regarding the conduct of the diocese.

The Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie, has expressed his disappointment and surprise at the amount of misinformation in Mr. Garabedian's comments. He failed to take into account much information that is publicly available. If what Mr. Garabedian alleges were true and complete, then Attorney General Shapiro would have prosecuted individuals beyond David Poulson.

Indeed, as publicly documented, both the district attorney and the attorney general involved in this case recognized the diocese's full cooperation, noting that this victim's report was handled properly, that the diocese's efforts led to a successful prosecution and that the diocese's "steps to prevent these horrors from happening again" are to be "commend[ed.]"

This case was thoroughly investigated under Pennsylvania law by trained law enforcement prosecutors and agents who subpoenaed documents and testimony. Per the settlement, signed by Mr. Garabedian, (attached), he was well aware that the Diocese of Erie:

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1. had no knowledge of the case involving John Doe until Jan. 26, 2018;
2. immediately informed law enforcement and K&L Gates, its independent investigators; and
3. K&L Gates not only unearthed significant evidence corroborating the victim's report but also communicated results of its investigation to both the diocese and law enforcement.

As a direct result, the wrongdoer, Poulson, was convicted and is behind bars.

Mr. Garabedian emphasized that sorrow is not enough and that victims need to see action. Getting a sex offender put in prison is action. An immediate two-million-dollar pre-litigation settlement of the full amount requested by his client — and the dedication of millions more to a victims' compensation fund currently underway — is action. Mr. Garabedian also appears to be inexplicably unaware of the following substantial measures taken by the diocese:

1. The significant update to the diocese's *Policy for the Protection of Children*, announced in April 2018, has been an important priority of Bishop Lawrence Persico's episcopacy.
2. All of Bishop Persico's statements since that time have been posted and remain available at <https://www.eriecd.org/Bishop-Persicos-statements.html>.
3. A link to the Public Disclosure List of people credibly accused of actions that, in the diocese's judgment, disqualify them from working with children, is available on that same page, and has been updated three times since it was first published.
4. Bishop Persico has worked hard to keep the public informed every step of the way through news releases, making himself available to the media, meeting with parishes, speaking at public events, writing letters to clergy and to parishioners, and in the publication of a special edition of *Faith* magazine devoted to the Grand Jury.

The diocese respects the victim's right to go public with news of the settlement. Indeed, the Settlement Agreement itself expressly states that there is no confidentiality obligation binding any party. Although the victim expressly requested his name be made public during the sentencing of David Poulson, the Diocese of Erie will respect the wish he expressed through his lawyer today that his name not be used, referring to him as John Doe.

The diocese continues to demonstrate both humility and sorrow for what occurred and has been very public about the many protocols that have been put in place over the years to keep children safe.

Bishop Persico said he is very disappointed that Mr. Garabedian was either unaware of or chose to ignore so much information, including what was contained in the settlement agreement itself. The bishop is confident that the truth will prevail.