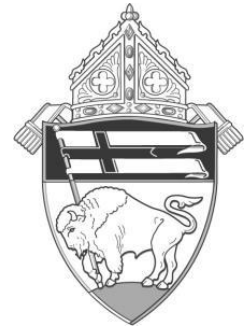

Diocese of Buffalo

Office of Communications



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 25, 2022

Diocese of Buffalo and NY Attorney General Agree to Settle Lawsuit

(Buffalo, NY) – The Diocese of Buffalo and the New York Attorney General have reached an agreement that concludes the lawsuit brought against the Diocese by the Attorney General in November 2020 and related to the past handling of clergy sexual abuse allegations.

“The settlement that the Diocese and the New York Attorney General have agreed to confirms that the rigorous policies and protocols the Diocese has put in place over the past several years are the right ones to ensure that all young people and other vulnerable persons are safe and never at risk of abuse of any kind by a member of the clergy, diocesan employee, volunteer, or member of a religious order serving in the Diocese of Buffalo,” said **Bishop Michael W. Fisher**. “At the same time, we have strengthened our Safe Environment policies with the Priest Supervision Program which I implemented in June of last year to account for priests removed from active ministry, and with the additional appointment of a new Child Protection Policy Coordinator. We hope that these initiatives, along with our commitment to producing an additional detailed annual compliance audit by an independent auditor, will provide further evidence of our commitment to the level of accountability and transparency that all Catholic faithful and the broader public rightly deserve and require.”

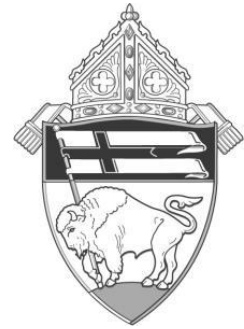
The majority of stipulations outlined in the settlement are already in force as part of the Diocese’s policies and protocols that have been developed since the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops mandated the [**Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People**](#) in 2002. These can be found at [**Creating A Safe Environment**](#) on the Diocesan website. It should be noted that the [**Diocese’s Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Young People and Vulnerable Adults**](#) emphasizes the critical importance of education and training in the ongoing effort to eliminate all forms of sexual misconduct, in addition to defining personal boundaries, the violation of which is regarded as a betrayal of the ministerial relationship, whether as a member of the clergy or layperson. The Diocese’s policies have been successful, as demonstrated by the fact that nearly 100% of the child abuse claims received by the Diocese and nearly 100% of the claims asserted in court during the past few years involve abuse that is alleged to have occurred before the year 2002.

In agreement with the Attorney General, the Diocese has appointed a Child Protection Policy Coordinator who is responsible for ensuring that the rigorous child protection policies and protocols are consistently followed. **Ms. Melissa Potzler**, a former Assistant District Attorney for Erie County, NY, a former criminal defense attorney, and the recent Parish Life Coordinator at

(Continued)

Diocese of Buffalo

Office of Communications



Nativity of Our Lord Parish in Orchard Park, NY, has taken on this responsibility. She will also serve as Vice Chancellor, reporting directly to Bishop Fisher. Ms. Potzler's responsibilities include overseeing the processes by which the Diocese complies with all applicable laws and regulations as well as its own Governing Policies. In addition, she is responsible for overseeing the Priest Supervision Program.

Since 2002, the Diocese has annually contracted with an external firm to conduct a thorough audit of its policies and protocols as they relate to training, reporting, and ensuring safe environments for young people and in accordance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The results of the audit are published on the diocesan website. As part of the settlement, the Diocese has also agreed to an additional "Compliance Audit," to be conducted by an external, independent auditor, approved by the Attorney General's office, who will be provided full access to all relevant departments and records and the full cooperation by all diocesan representatives necessary to conduct the audit. The Compliance Auditor is subject also to the approval of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court. **Dr. Kathleen McChesney**, CEO/Principal of [Kinsale Management Consulting](#), and the former Executive Director of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Conference's (USCCB) national Office of Child and Youth Protection, as well as a former high ranking FBI official and head of FBI offices in Chicago and Portland, OR, has agreed to serve in the role of independent Compliance Auditor. The primary focus of Dr. McChesney will be to ensure that the Diocese of Buffalo complies fully with the commitments outlined in the settlement with the Attorney General's office. An annual report of this additional Compliance Audit will likewise be published and made available in full on the diocesan website annually.

Finally, with regard to Bishops Richard Malone and Edward Grosz, former Bishop and Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Buffalo respectively and who were represented by their own legal counsel, the Attorney General has required, and they have agreed to refrain from serving as a director, trustee, officer, or equivalent fiduciary position with any charitable entity registered in the State of New York. Neither Bishop Malone nor Bishop Grosz has been accused of any financial impropriety. Furthermore, the Attorney General's requirement does not bar Bishop Malone or Bishop Grosz from serving in a ministerial, pastoral, or spiritual role, within any Diocese in New York State, or from serving as a volunteer to any charitable entity registered in the State of New York.

The full settlement agreement between the Diocese of Buffalo and the New York Attorney General and related materials are available at: www.buffalodiocese.org/attorney-general-settlement

###