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Providence, R.I. — December 30, 2019
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Rhode Island's Roman Catholic diocese is challenging a lawsuit filed after a state law gave sex abuse victims more time to sue their abusers or the institutions they worked for.

The challenge by the Diocese of Providence comes in the case of a 53-year-old man who sued the diocese in September, saying he was abused as a child in the 1970s and 1980s by a now-dead North Providence priest, The Providence Journal reported Dec. 27.

The plaintiff was the first to file a priest abuse lawsuit after the state, one of the nation's most heavily Catholic, extended the statute of limitations on civil claims for child sexual abuse. Gov. Gina Raimondo, a Democrat, signed the law over the summer.

The diocese is asking the Superior Court to dismiss the case, arguing that the state can't extend the deadline on lawsuits over child sex abuse if the deadline had already run out under the old law.

"The Rhode Island Supreme Court has held unequivocally that retroactive legislative changes to statutes of limitations that revive already time-barred claims are unconstitutional," the diocese's lawyers said.

The motion to dismiss is not unexpected, said Timothy Conlon, an attorney for the man suing the diocese.

The diocese and its lawyers did not respond to a request for comment.

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