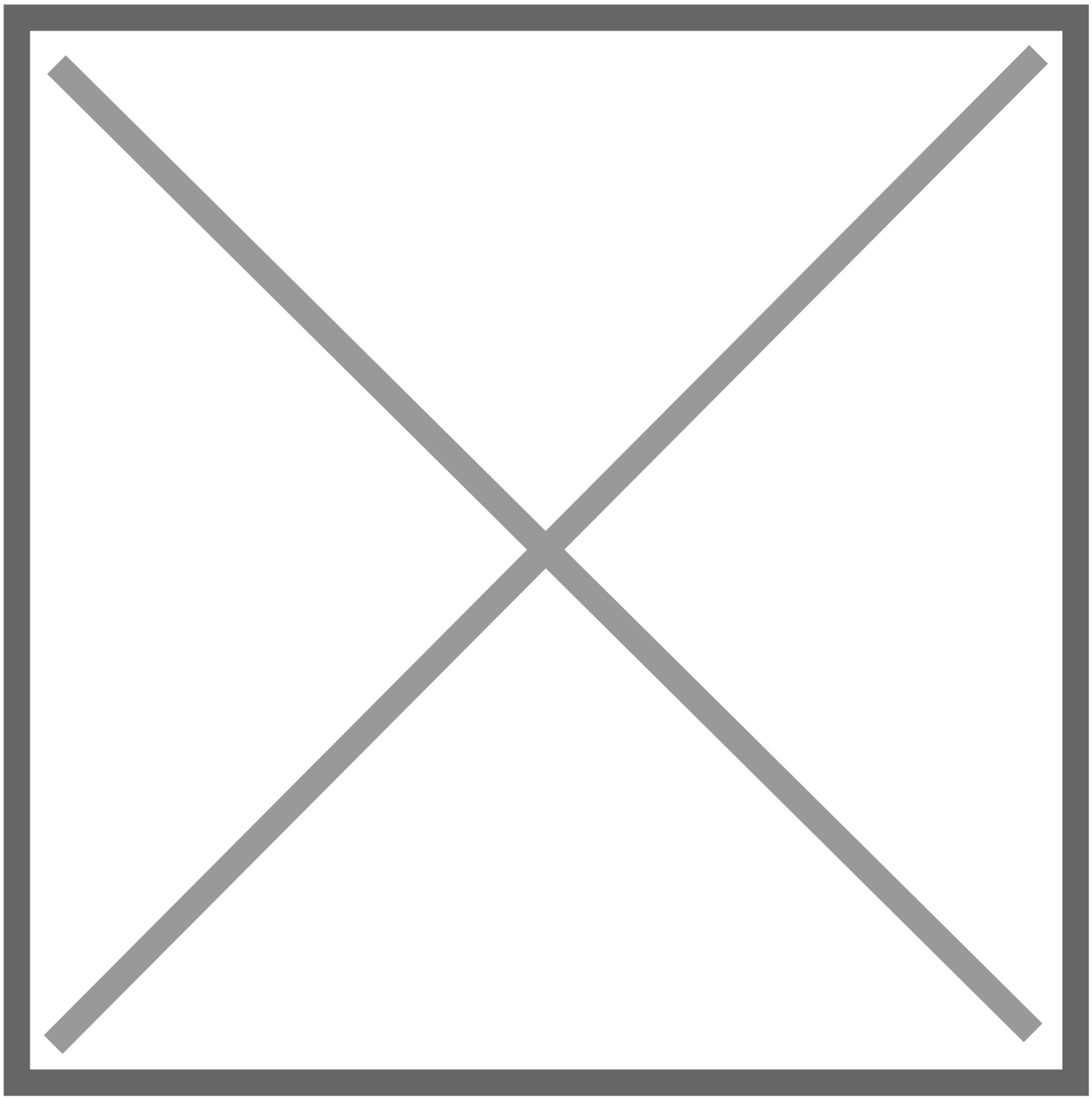
News



The Maryland Supreme Court in Annapolis is pictured in an undated photo. The court ruled April 27, 2026, that the attorney general cannot publish the names of Catholic clergy or staff who are alleged to have covered up sex abuse but haven't been charged with a crime. (OSV News/Greg Karpoff/ Courtesy of the Maryland Judiciary)

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Annapolis, Md. — April 30, 2026
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Maryland's top court has ruled that state's attorney general cannot disclose the names of Archdiocese of Baltimore clergy and staff appearing in a grand jury investigation of alleged sexual abuse that have not been charged with any crimes.

That inquiry — which did not lead to any indictments — cited both alleged perpetrators of abuse and individuals who may have concealed or failed to stop such acts.

The case centered on the historic secrecy of grand jury proceedings, which has been codified at both state and federal levels.

The Maryland Supreme Court decision was issued April 27, overturning an appellate court ruling that allowed the state attorney general to publish a report with the material obtained through the grand jury inquiry. A court order to do so was required in the absence of an indictment from the grand jury.

The Archdiocese of Baltimore "respects the decision of the Maryland Supreme Court, which affirms longstanding grand jury practice that protects the rights of individuals," said Christian Kendzierski, the archdiocese's executive director of communications, in an April 29 email to OSV News.

"Such protection prohibits the Attorney General from publicly naming individuals who were neither accused of, nor indicted for, crimes without any meaningful

opportunity to defend themselves," he said.

In response to the decision, Angela Walker, executive director of the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests, was quoted by The Baltimore Sun as saying that "transparency is essential to repairing the damage done to survivors of clerical sexual abuse."

"Too often, a culture of silence surrounds clerical sexual abuse, marginalizing survivors and protecting abusers and those who choose to shield them from accountability," she added. "The community has a right to know to protect their children."

Grand juries, though initially public, have historically insisted on secrecy for an array of reasons, including freedom of deliberation and protection of the unindicted. Such secrecy is stipulated in U.S. federal law, with Maryland's General Assembly first codifying a grand jury secrecy requirement in 1955.

In his opinion, Justice Jonathan Biran said while the state attorney general had the authority to investigate alleged abuse by archdiocesan clergy and staff, the office had not shown disclosing the names would "serve an interest beyond the public's interest in learning the information."

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"Many grand jury investigations obtain damaging information and allegations about uncharged individuals that the public might benefit from learning," he wrote.

At the same time, he said, "One of the primary purposes of grand jury secrecy is to protect uncharged persons from public disgrace in the absence of a criminal charge and a forum in which to seek vindication."

In his statement, Kendzierski said the high court's decision "affirms that the Attorney General’s efforts to disclose the names of individuals who stand accused of no crime would violate state law surrounding ground jury proceedings and result in serious reputational harm to several individuals who stand accused of no crime."

In 2018, Maryland's attorney general office opened its criminal investigation regarding allegations both of child sexual abuse and its coverup by Archdiocese of

Baltimore clergy and staff.

Under two subpoenas, the archdiocese produced "hundreds of thousands of records" relating to abuse allegations, with some dating back to 1940.

The attorney general's office had noted in its report that "most of the abusers and those who concealed their wrongdoing are dead and no longer subject to prosecution."

Although the grand jury — which had not summoned any witnesses — did not result in any indictments, the attorney general had sought to publish the findings, receiving authorization from a circuit court to release a redacted version in April 2023.

Thirty individuals, including the 17 petitioners in the case before the Maryland Supreme Court, objected, prompting a legal battle. Eighteen persons challenged the circuit court in four separate appeals. None had ever been charged with crime relating to the abuse allegations, Biran said.

Among the appellants were two priests from the Diocese of Erie, Pennsylvania (incorrectly named in Biran's opinion the "Archdiocese of Erie").

The priests had not been accused of abuse, and were never affiliated with the Archdiocese of Baltimore — but were included in the Maryland attorney general's report "to detail their alleged involvement" in the archdiocese's "effort to transfer an abusive priest to the Erie Diocese," said Biran in his opinion.

Biran's opinion explored in detail the legal reasoning behind grand jury secrecy, stating the court had "reaffirmed" the "the long-established rule ... that if a grand jury does not indict, it may not publicly criticize."

Describing the attorney general's request to disclose the petitioners' names as "unprecedented," Biran wrote in conclusion that "a court may not order disclosure of secret grand jury material, over the objection of an uncharged individual, for the purpose of holding that person accountable in the court of public opinion."