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USCCB

The Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 Fourth Street, N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20017-1194

Dear Bishop Gregory:

The Bishops of the Province of Hartford at our meeting yesterday requested that I write to you to express our concern over disturbing trends in the development of the Office for the Protection of Children and Young People and the National Review Board.

We reaffirm our commitment to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and to the Essential Norms. We recognize also that both the Office and the Review Board were called for by the bishops. We are troubled, therefore, when we see the word "independent" being used indiscriminately in reference to both entities. They appear to be expanding their competence, responsibilities, activities, and studies in a dynamic of autonomy.

A particularly disturbing example is the intervention of the Office in individual cases in various dioceses, and this being carried forward without communication with the local Diocesan Bishop. We believe it is generally understood that the Office is in no way a court of appeals.

The Office appears also to be handling cases involving priests and adults.

While we renew our commitment to the Charter and the Norms, we are aware that they are subject to an upcoming review by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. We trust that the Office and the Review Board will be part of that review.

Be assured of our continued prayers and all best wishes.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Henry J. Mansell  
Archbishop of Hartford

cc: Reverend Monsignor William P. Fay