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SNAP Asks Bishop Lori To Release Sealed Files

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The director of a national group of priest abuse victims tried to present a letter to Bishop William Lori Tuesday asking him to stop the legal fight to keep thousands of pages of court files concerning abusive priests in the Bridgeport Diocese sealed.

On the heels of last week's state Supreme Court decision ordering the unsealing of more than 12,600 court documents involving sexual abuse allegations against several priests the diocese released a statement calling the ruling an "injustice" and vowing to review all of its legal options.

In its letter Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP) asks Lori to reconsider that vow.

"So we ask that you put the safety of children, the healing of victims and the overall benefit of the church itself (particularly the trusting, generous parishioners) above the short term discomfort of church officials who fear having to face tough questions - in the news media, from parishioners or in open court - about how much they knew and how little they did about these horrific crimes," the letter said.

SNAP Director David Clohessy flew in from St. Louis to personally deliver the letter to the diocese's offices. He was accompanied by at least two other priest abuse victims.

"We implore you: please let just the rulings of two courts and the needs of victims take precedence over any other perceived needs, especially those of the church hierarchy. Please allow your parishioners and the public the chance to learn the truth about the crimes that were committed and concealed," the letter said.

The court ruled by a 4-1 margin to unseal the files. The decision will not become official until it is published in the Connecticut Law Journal on June 2.

The justices rejected the church's main argument that Superior Court Judge Jon M. Alander, who ruled in 2006 that the files be unsealed, should have recused himself from making that decision because he was also serving at that time on a judicial committee reviewing public access to court documents.

The court ruled that just because Alander was a member of the task force did not mean that he couldn't be fair and impartial. It also ruled that just because one of the other members of the judicial task force was a reporter from The Courant didn't mean that Alander had a conflict.