

Barber says sexual abuse hotline worth the cost

January 18, 2023

NEW ORLEANS (BP)—“The cost of doing nothing” to combat sexual abuse far outweighs “the cost of doing something,” Southern Baptist Convention President Bart Barber said in a [video posted to his Twitter account](#) Jan. 17.



Bart Barber, pastor of First Baptist Church in Farmersville, speaks during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting at the Anaheim Convention Center in Anaheim, Calif. Barber was elected president. (Photo by Justin L. Stewart/Religion News Service)

Responding to multiple requests to reveal the monthly costs associated with a hotline to report incidents of sexual abuse that occur within Southern Baptist churches, Barber noted, “There’s not a flat monthly cost for the hotline.”

He explained the costs of the hotline vary based on call volume but did not

share any specific expenditures.

“And of course, the first few months of the hotline came when we’d never had anything like that before. And because we’d never had anything like that before, there’s a backlog of people waiting to call in,” said Barber, pastor of First Baptist Church in Farmersville.

The hotline was established May 25, 2022, in response to a report released by Guidepost Solutions outlining alleged mishandling of sexual abuse claims by the SBC Executive Committee over two decades.

It is managed by Guidepost and was in the news earlier this month when accusations were made that the information shared to the hotline was [not being kept confidential](#).

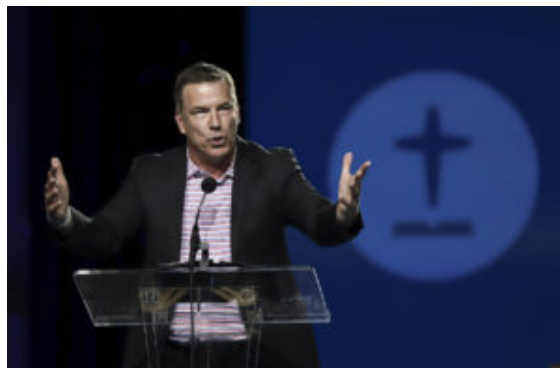
Barber readily acknowledged the hotline is expensive but countered the high costs by suggesting it would cost more in the long run if Southern Baptists do nothing to address sexual abuse.

“For all of my adult lifetime there have been occasions where sexual abuse took place, and the (Southern Baptist) Convention was sued, and we’ve been paying that expense,” Barber said in the video.

“The only way to make the expense go away is to make the abuse go away. And I firmly believe that anything that we can do to prevent sexual abuse in our churches, anything that we can do to aid survivors and help them is money well spent and reduces our expenses in the long run.”

‘The human cost of abuse’

He added there is more to the cost than just dollars.



North Carolina pastor Bruce Frank, chair of the Sexual Abuse Task Force, told messengers to the 2022 SBC annual meeting that June 14 was a day for Southern Baptists to “choose between humility or hubris.” (BP Photo by Sonya Singh)

Referring to the actions of messengers at the 2021 and 2022 SBC annual meetings, he said: “I think the main thing that has motivated us is the human cost. If we don’t care about the human cost of abuse, then we’re in the wrong business, and we’re serving the wrong master.”

Barber recorded the video, which runs for almost seven minutes, at the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, where the 2023 SBC annual meeting will be held in June.

In it, he also discussed an abuse-related court case in Houston he has been attending over the past few weeks, representing the SBC. A [civil suit against Paul Pressler](#) is being heard in the Harris County District Court. The charges in the case date back to the 1980s.

Pressler, a former SBC Executive Committee member, former SBC first vice president in 2002 and 2003, and former Texas legislator and judge, is being sued by Gerald Duane Rollins.

In the suit originally filed in October 2017, Rollins alleges Pressler raped him in 1980, when Rollins was 14 years old and attending a Bible study at Pressler's church. According to the affidavit, Pressler continued to rape Rollins, "over the course of the next 24 years or so" as Rollins progressed into his 30s.

Barber said despite the high costs, he believes having the hotline is the right thing to do.

"I think according to God's economy and according to the way that accountants look at the economy, it's a good investment for Southern Baptists to do everything that we can, even if it costs some money to do it, everything that we can to assist our local churches to prevent abuse and to comfort those and provide support for those who are survivors of abuse," Barber said.