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Bishop Douglas J. Lucia of Syracuse, N.Y., is seen in this June 4, 2019, file photo. (CNS/Catholic Sun/Chuck Wainwright)

by Associated Press

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SYRACUSE, N.Y. — July 28, 2023

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The Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse on July 27 announced a \$100 million settlement with people who say they were sexual abuse victims as part of its bankruptcy proceedings.

Catholic dioceses around the state are dealing with a surge of lawsuits dating to when New York temporarily suspended the statute of limitations to give people who say they were victims of childhood sexual abuse the ability to pursue decades-old allegations.

"I can tell you as shocking as the settlement amount may seem to leaders of our own parishes and other Catholic entities, more appalling and heart-rending to me is the pain and mistreatment experienced by the survivors of child and adult sexual abuse at the hands of those they thought they could trust," Bishop Douglas Lucia wrote in an open letter July 27.

The Syracuse diocese, which filed for bankruptcy protection in 2020, said there are 411 claims involving 387 people, with some people filing multiple claims. An abuse claims reviewer will be appointed to evaluate claims and make awards to survivors, according to the diocese.

The settlement, which remains subject to a creditor vote and court approval, would provide \$100 million to all victims of sexual abuse committed in the diocese by clergy, employees and volunteers. Under the agreement, the diocese would contribute \$50 million, parishes would contribute \$45 million and the remaining \$5 million would come from other diocesan entities, according to the diocese.

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The diocese and the committee of unsecured creditors were still discussing ways to strengthen child protection protocols.

This settlement does not include the six insurance companies that provided coverage to the diocese.

"Although the battle is not over, today's settlement represents a significant step toward the accountability and justice that survivors in the Diocese of Syracuse deserve," said Taylor Stippel, an attorney for victims.

Six of New York's eight dioceses have filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.