

# The 'faith-based' leader for Philly's Moms for Liberty chapter is a registered sex offender

Phillip Fisher Jr., a pastor and Republican ward leader who coordinates faith-based outreach for Philadelphia's Moms For Liberty chapter, pleaded guilty in 2012 to a charge of aggravated sexual abuse.



Phillip Fisher Jr., a Republican ward leader and pastor who coordinates faith-based outreach for Philadelphia's Moms For Liberty chapter, helps to run a mayoral townhall meeting in August.

by Chris Brennan

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Phillip Fisher Jr. is a pastor and Republican ward leader who coordinates faith-based outreach for Philadelphia's [Moms for Liberty](#) chapter.

He's also a registered sex offender, due to a 2012 felony conviction for aggravated sexual abuse of a 14-year-old boy when Fisher was 25.

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Fisher insists that he did nothing wrong, despite pleading guilty to one of 12 counts filed against him after an investigation by the Chicago Police

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He is the pastor at the [Center of Universal Divinity](#) in Olney and works with Moms for Liberty, a national conservative organization that bills itself as a [defender of parental rights](#), by connecting the Philadelphia chapter with other local faith leaders in an effort to grow the group.

He said his conviction is the result of a "railroad job" concocted by the political action committee for [Lyndon LaRouche](#), a fringe conspiracy theorist who ran repeatedly for president.

Fisher, who worked for LaRouche's organization, called it "a cult" and said he was set up while trying to break free.

His criminal history came as a shock to Vince Fenerty, chair of Philadelphia's Republican City Committee.

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Fenerty said he was unaware of Fisher's conviction until asked about it by The Inquirer last week. On Friday, he demanded and received Fisher's resignation as leader of [the 42nd Ward](#), which includes the neighborhoods of Olney, Feltonville, and Juniata Park.

A national spokesperson for Moms for Liberty did not respond to a request for comment about Fisher's criminal history.

Sheila Armstrong, another Republican ward leader who chairs the local Moms for Liberty chapter, said she was also surprised. She said Fisher has been active in community outreach events with local and federal law enforcement, and she expressed concern that children were sometimes part of that.

Armstrong was astounded to hear about Fisher's criminal past because she had just received from the state Department of Human Services on Thursday a "child abuse history certification" in Fisher's name so that he could volunteer for an upcoming Christmas Party for an autism nonprofit that she operates.

That certificate said "no records exist" in the state's database listing Fisher "as a perpetrator of an indicated or founded report of child abuse."

A DHS spokesperson, asked about the certificate, said "not all criminal convictions involving minors are considered child abuse," under the state's [Child Protective Services Law](#).

Fisher is listed on [Pennsylvania's "Megan's Law" website](#) for registered sex offenders, maintained by the Pennsylvania State Police, in a file last updated in July. That includes [some details about his conviction](#), annual photos he is required to submit, and his home address in Philadelphia.

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## **Involvement in local and national Republican politics**

Fisher has been an active participant in local and national politics in recent years.

For Moms for Liberty in Philadelphia, he said he helped connect the group with other pastors, a rabbi, and an imam.

”Given that I am a known and respected pastor throughout the city, I have ties with different religious organizations from Philadelphia to Lancaster,” Fisher told The Inquirer.

The national Moms for Liberty organization held a summit in Philadelphia this past summer, where denying transgender identity for children and removing books from school libraries [were major themes](#).

The summit [featured speeches](#) from former President [Donald Trump](#), former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

Armstrong, who was part of the planning committee, said Fisher was a volunteer at the summit.

Fisher has supported Trump’s campaigns; a [2020 report by WHY](#) included a mural in support of Trump that Fisher said was painted on an exterior wall of his church by children he worked with in his congregation.

He was [a guest on 1210 WPHT](#) last fall after campaigning with Republican Senate candidate Mehmet Oz.

And he helped organize and run [a town hall meeting in August](#) for David Oh's Republican campaign for mayor in Philadelphia.

## **A criminal case in Chicago**

Fisher, in two interviews with The Inquirer, confirmed the details of his criminal conviction.

He repeatedly denied any wrongdoing and called his conviction “one blip” in his background. He blamed it all on a dispute about his trying to break away from the LaRouche organization, and said the 14-year-old boy and his parents were part of that group.

“It was a political situation that happened between me and Lyndon LaRouche,” Fisher said. “It was a member of his camp, his party, that made the accusation. They pushed it through. It was really a railroad job.”

Documents from the Cook County Clerk of Circuit Court show that a grand jury there indicted Fisher in January 2011 on 12 felony counts of sexual assault and aggravated criminal sexual abuse.

Fisher waived his right to a jury trial 15 months later and was adjudicated guilty on one count of aggravated criminal sexual abuse of a minor between the ages of 13 and 17.

The charging documents allege that Fisher had oral and anal sex with the 14-year-old boy in January 2011.

Those documents don't say how Fisher met the 14-year-old, how the case came to the attention of law enforcement, or any defense Fisher offered in the case before pleading guilty.

He was sentenced to three years in prison and given credit for nearly 20 months he spent in jail waiting for his case to come to court, followed by two years of supervised release.

Fisher said he took the plea bargain to get out of the county jail, where he said he experienced violence from other prisoners.

“I actually broke down,” he said. “I said I’ll do whatever I have to do to get out of there.”

Fisher said he went to Illinois “through the LaRouche organization,” in a case of what he called human trafficking.

“At the time, I was the victim,” Fisher said. “What they did was basically trumped up charges to drown out the complaints that I was making on the issues of human rights.”

Two photos published on the website of the visual media company Getty Images corroborate that he worked with the LaRouche campaign, as they show Fisher [protesting outside of a town hall](#) meeting about health care at a Chicago church in August 2009 on behalf of LaRouche’s political action committee.

In the photos, Fisher [held a large poster](#) with a picture of then-President Barack Obama defaced to add a mustache like the one made infamous by Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany.

Fisher confirmed for The Inquirer that he is the person in those photos.

Fisher is [registered on a sex offender](#) list kept on a website maintained by the Illinois State Police, which includes his photograph and information that the victim in the case was 14 years old.

That information is also listed on the [National Sex Offender Website](#) maintained by the U.S. Department of Justice.

While Fisher's background came as a shock to people who work with him, he noted that the information was always publicly available.

"I never went out of my way to hide anything," he said. "I'm in the database. It's an easy search."



Chris Brennan [✉](#) [✕](#) [📷](#)

I write about politics at the federal, state, and local level. I also lead Clout, an often irreverent column on people, power, and politics.

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