

March 21, 2023

The Honorable Hal Rogers, Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

The Honorable Matt Cartwright, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen, Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

The Honorable Jerry Moran, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

Dear Chairman Rogers and Chairwoman Shaheen and Ranking Members Cartwright and Moran,

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to respectfully request critical fiscal year 2024 increases for the following Commerce, Justice, and Science accounts that assist in combating Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children (OSEAC). Over the past fifteen years, the number of reports of suspected child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) made to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's (NCMEC) CyberTipline has [increased by 15,000%](#), reaching a staggering 29.3 million in 2021.

- **U.S. Leads in Number of CSAM URLs:** The [US accounted for 30% of the global total of child sexual abuse material URLs](#), the highest percentage globally, at the end of March 2022.
- **U.S. law enforcement resources are inadequate to address the problem:** Over the past three months, [law enforcement was not able to investigate nearly 100,000 IP addresses](#) that are known to be downloading and sharing CSAM due to limited resources.
- **Link between CSAM and Hands-on Abuse:** A 2022 survey of dark web users conducted by Finnish nonprofit Suojellaan Lapsia Ry found that [37% of global respondents reported seeking direct contact with a child after viewing CSAM](#).
- **Dramatic Rise in Sextortion:** Between 2019-2021, [sexortion reports to NCMEC more than doubled](#). [Financial sextortion targeting adolescent boys](#) in particular is growing.
- **Children's Mental Health:** A growing body of evidence shows that [social media use by children has been linked to higher rates of anxiety and depression](#). Research conducted by the UK's National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children found that children that have shared feelings of vulnerability online are at [higher risk of being targeted and groomed by offenders online](#).
- **Online Predation:** Researchers have observed a ["three-fold" increase](#) in self-generated imagery depicting 7- to 10-year-olds, as they were increasingly targeted and groomed by internet predators on an industrial scale.
- **Reduced Perceptions of Child Safety:** Some [80% of children in 25 countries](#) report feeling in danger of sexual abuse or exploitation online. For a child victim, this may result in social isolation, mental health issues, substance abuse, self-harm or suicide,

as well as an increased likelihood of exhibiting abusive behaviors themselves in adulthood.

- **Abuse of Digital Technologies:** As faster broadband connections, mobile devices, and social media platforms have become more widely accessible, the production and dissemination of child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) has increased in volume, providing offenders with additional technical possibilities to produce and share CSAM content.

Combatting this rise will require coordination between the private sector, civil society, and government entities. All children deserve to be safe from harm, and we must work to protect them from those who exploit and abuse them. Funding for a holistic and multidisciplinary approach, including the enforcement of existing sex trafficking and child sexual exploitation laws, is critical to ending OSEAC in the United States and around the world.

The methods and platforms that offenders use to exploit and abuse children are constantly evolving, forcing law enforcement, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations to frequently change tactics and tools in response. However, with limited resources, United States law enforcement agencies are increasingly unable to prioritize and respond to the growing number of [CyberTips](#) and proactively work cases of child sexual exploitation. Outlined below, we request increased funding to the following accounts to protect children from these crimes and end the cycle of abuse and trauma that they ultimately face.

Office of Justice Programs FY 2024 Recommendations and Past Appropriations			
	FY23 Appropriation	FY 24 Presidential Budget Request	FY24 Recommendation
Juvenile Justice Programs			
Missing and Exploited Children	105,000,000	130,000,000	130,000,000 - 40,000,000 for NCMEC - 60,000,000 for Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program

Victims of Child Abuse Programs	41,000,000	50,000,000	50,000,000
Total Crime Victims Fund (CVF) (Mandatory) Obligations Cap			
Crime Victims Fund Obligations Cap	1,900,000,000	1,200,000,000	Critical funding

Juvenile Justice Programs

Missing and Exploited Children - at least \$130 million

We request at least \$130 million for Missing and Exploited Children programs. This item is located within the Juvenile Justice Programs account in the DOJ's Office of Justice Programs budget. Funding for this account is split between the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force program, the AMBER Alert system and AMBER in Indian Country Training and Technical Assistance programs and the Missing & Exploited Children Training and Technical Assistance programs.

These offices and programs support coordination between states and the federal government on cases related to missing, exploited, and abused children - including cases of online sexual exploitation and abuse. This funding request aligns with the President's Budget Request for FY24 and reflects the dire need for increased funding to respond to exponential growth in OSEAC and protect children online and offline.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) - \$40 million

We request full funding in the amount of \$40 million (in accordance with the Missing Children's Assistance Act) for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). NCMEC serves as the U.S.'s national missing children's clearinghouse and also operates the CyberTipline, which receives reports from internet service providers and the public of suspected OSEAC and child sexual abuse material. NCMEC refers these reports to international, federal, and state law enforcement agencies for investigation.

Funding for NCMEC is critical, as it plays a crucial role in assisting the government to support and protect vulnerable children. In 2021, global reports made to NCMEC's CyberTipline [increased by 35% from 2020](#). To date, the tipline has registered over 1,800 companies, which referred 29.1 of the 29.3 million online child exploitation reports in 2021. This growth poses a great risk to the online safety of children. Therefore, it is vitally important that NCMEC receives

full funding to properly respond to these growing risks.

Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program (ICAC) - \$60 million

We request full funding in the amount of \$60 million for the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program (ICAC), as authorized under the PROTECT Our Children Act of 2008. ICAC is a national network of state and local law enforcement agencies. As children face increased vulnerabilities, we must meet the investigative and training needs of agencies that are responding to technological advances that allow for victimization of children. According to the [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#), more than 123,790 suspects have been arrested since the creation of the ICAC program.

However, current funding is not enough for investigators to be able to proactively investigate all credible leads. Over the last 90 days, [99,172 IP addresses in the US that are downloading and sharing known CSAM are not being investigated](#). 50 to 80% of perpetrators behind these IP addresses are hands-on offenders, with each offender victimizing 10-13 child victims on average. Currently, only 782 IP addresses are being investigated at any given time due to a lack of adequate funding and investigator capacity.

We request \$10 million of the ICAC funding to be dedicated to ICAC training and technical support, specifically the ICAC training providers; Fox Valley Technical College, SEARCH, National White Collar Crime Center, Innocent Justice Foundation. This dedicated funding will ensure the continuity of vital training by these providers and ensure that agencies are able to engage in reactive and proactive investigations, forensic and criminal investigations and prosecutions, and prevention and community education as outlined in the Protect Our Children Act of 2008.

We request that \$3 million of the ICAC funding be dedicated to increase the technological capacity to support the continued development, refinement, and advancement of widely used technologies employed to investigate offenders who manufacture, possess and trade child sexual abuse images, with an additional \$1 million set-aside to support the ICACCOPS system. Studies have shown that convicted offenders victimize an average of 33 children before being apprehended. Federal, State and local law enforcement officers need the tools and training necessary to successfully interdict these crimes, identify the victims and provide services to them and their families.

Victims of Child Abuse Programs - \$50 million

We request \$50 million for programs related to implementation of the Victims of Child Abuse Act. These programs include Child Advocacy Centers (CACs), which provide support services to around [386,191 child survivors of abuse](#) (including OSEAC) in 2021. CACs provide critical, evidence-based, and trauma-informed programs that support child survivors' mental health and aid in their recovery. Childhood trauma resulting from abuse and other types of violence has been shown to raise [children's risk of experiencing lifelong negative effects](#) on their physical and mental health and wellbeing, including depression, substance abuse, heart disease, cancer, and stroke. However, these risks can be mitigated when child survivors are provided with comprehensive response services, like those provided by CACs.

While CACs are partly funded by the Crime Victims Fund, changing obligation caps related to the amount of criminal fines and penalties collected by federal courts make it difficult for CACs to provide consistent programming and services. In addition, it is estimated that more than 75,000 children that are abused annually live in areas without access to CACs and more than 80,000 children that do have access to a CAC do not have adequate access to mental health services to support their healing. Funding for this account allows CACs throughout the country to maintain provision of vital services, regardless of the annual cap. Additional funding will solidify CACs' budgets and allow them to serve additional child survivors.

Crime Victims Fund - Critical funding

The Office for Victims of Crime in the Department of Justice oversees and disburses funding from the Crime Victims Fund to states and NGOs to support survivors of crime, including child survivors of sexual abuse and exploitation, through assistance and compensation programs like Child Advocacy Centers. Despite growing need and demand for these support programs, recent years' final budget caps for the Crime Victims Fund have steadily decreased. While we understand these decreases were related to the depleting balance of the Crime Victims Fund, the real impact has severely restrained the services and support that can be provided to survivors. With passage of the VOCA Fix Act and other measures hoping to shore up the Fund, we request that Congress set the FY24 obligation cap to the maximum amount possible.

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The Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies subcommittee has a long-standing record of supporting investments that protect children and youth from the lifelong trauma of OSEAC. Increased U.S. government funding for these accounts will send a strong signal that the U.S. prioritizes the health, protection, and safety of *all* children, whether interacting in the digital or physical world.

Sincerely,

Augusta Associates LLC
The Carly Ryan Foundation
ChildFund International
ECPAT-USA
Enough Is Enough
International Justice Mission
Keep Kids Safe
National Child Protection Task Force
National Children's Alliance
National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College
Protect Young Eyes
Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)
Raven
Rights4Girls
Thorn
UNICEF USA
WeProtect Global Alliance

Youth Power Project