

March 20, 2023

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart, Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

The Honorable Barbara Lee, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

The Honorable Chris Coons, Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

The Honorable Lindsey Graham, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

Dear Chairmen Diaz-Balart and Coons and Ranking Members Lee and Graham,

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to respectfully request \$15 million for the Child Protection Compacts (CPC) program in the Fiscal Year 2024 State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill. Online sexual exploitation and abuse of children (OSEAC) is one of the fastest growing crimes and threats against children. 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.
- **Dramatic Rise in Sextortion:** Between 2019-2021, [sexortion reports to NCMEC more than doubled](#). [Financial sextortion targeting adolescent boys](#) in particular is growing.
- **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](#).
- **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.

Despite the exponential increase in OSEAC globally, many governments around the world do not have the infrastructure and capacity necessary to adequately respond to and investigate suspected cases. CPCs are \$5 million, multi-year bilateral agreements negotiated by the U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP) and partner governments to support the sustainable development of partner governments' capacity to prevent and respond to child trafficking, including OSEAC, through a multi-year strategic plan.

From 2017-2021, the U.S.-Philippines Child Protection Compact Partnership supported the Philippine government's efforts to effectively understand, prevent, respond to, and combat the growing and borderless crime of OSEAC through capacity-building and scaling of its NGO partners' collective efforts. Specifically, the compact enabled the Philippine government and its partners to:

- Train 241 law enforcement agents, 100 public prosecutors and 110 aftercare service providers on how to appropriately handle OSEAC cases.
- Develop and implement best practices in victim-centered prosecutions, including plea bargains, which protected 100 survivors from the challenges of a full trial.
- Establish the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC) to forge greater collaboration and cooperation between Philippine units and foreign law enforcement.
- Increase the number of victim-centered OSEAC and child labor trafficking investigations, prosecutions, and convictions, including the rescue of 391 victims.
- Strengthen capacity to identify and provide comprehensive services for victims of OSEAC and child labor trafficking, including through the formation of the Foster Care Working Group.
- Strengthen existing community-based mechanisms for identifying and protecting child victims of OSEAC and child labor trafficking, including domestic servitude, and preventing these crimes.

We express gratitude to the subcommittee for funding the CPCs at the level of \$12.5 million in FY23. An allocation of at least \$15 million for the CPC program will allow for three more compacts with additional countries and would support the development of their infrastructure and capacity to respond to OSEAC and other horrible forms of child trafficking.

The State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs subcommittee has a long-standing record of supporting investments that protect children and youth. Increased U.S. government funding for the CPC program 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
Thorn
UNICEF USA
WeProtect Global Alliance
Youth Power Project