

March 30, 2022

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

The Honorable Robert Aderholt, 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 Cartwright and Chairwoman Shaheen and Ranking Members Aderholt and Moran,

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to respectfully request robust fiscal year 2023 increases for the following Commerce, Justice, and Science accounts that assist in combating Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children (OSEAC). The [US Sentencing Commission's October 2021 report](#), which studied child sexual abuse image producers, found that the number of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) producers sentenced between 2005 and 2019 increased by 422%.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this preexisting crisis, with societal changes caused by pandemic restrictions and increased internet usage significantly impacting children in many ways, including:

- **Transformations in Education:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, children [spent more time online in 2022](#) - both unsupervised and during traditional school hours. As a result, children have become more vulnerable to exploitative and potentially violent interactions with cybercriminals.
- **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.
- **Cyber Exploitation:** In 2021, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) received more than [29.3 million global CyberTipline reports containing over 84.9 million images](#), videos, and other content related to suspected child sexual exploitation.
- **Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM):** Studies have shown that at least 50% of people who have been convicted of manufacturing, possessing and/or trading known CSAM material also sexually assault minors. The National Criminal Justice Training Center’s (NCJTC) ICACCOPS system detects over 70,000 unique IP addresses trading known CSAM images on a monthly basis in the United States.
- **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:

<b>Office of Justice Programs FY 2023 Recommendations and Past Appropriations</b>			
	<b>FY22 Appropriation</b>	<b>FY 23 Presidential Budget Request</b>	<b>FY23 Recommendation</b>
<b>Juvenile Justice Programs</b>			
Missing and Exploited Children	99,000,000	120,000,000	120,000,000 (including 40 million for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 60 million for the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, 4.4 million for the AMBER alert system, and additional funding for Technical Assistance and Research)

Victims of Child Abuse Programs	33,000,000	50,000,000	50,000,000
<b>Total Crime Victims Fund (CVF) (Mandatory) Obligations Cap</b>			
Crime Victims Fund Obligations Cap	2,600,000,000	1,750,000,000	2,650,000,000+

**Juvenile Justice Programs**

Missing and Exploited Children - at least \$120 million

We request at least \$120 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 FY22 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 2020, global reports made to NCMEC’s CyberTipline increased by 28% from 2019. To date, the tipline has registered 1,400 companies, which referred 21.4 of the 21.7 million online child exploitation reports in 2020. 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 118,800 suspects have been arrested since the creation of the ICAC program.

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 support existing technologies and to research new technologies used 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 [200,000 child survivors of abuse](#) (including OSEAC) each year. 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. 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 - Increase the FY23 Obligation Cap**

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, Congress has continually lowered the obligation cap for the Crime Victims Fund each fiscal year. In FY21, Congress set the obligation cap at \$2.015 billion, a \$641 million decrease compared to FY20, which was already down from the \$3.353 billion cap in FY19 and the \$4.436 billion cap in FY18. While these decreases were related to the depleting balance of the Crime Victims Fund, it has severely restrained the services and support that can be provided to survivors. With passage of the VOCA Fix Act and new revenue streams added to support the Fund, we request that Congress set the FY23 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,

ChildFund International  
ECPAT-USA  
Enough is Enough  
International Justice Mission  
Keep Kids Safe  
Lynn's Warriors  
National Children's Alliance  
The National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College  
ParentsTogether  
Protect Young Eyes  
Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)  
Thorn  
UNICEF USA