

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

April 27, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chairwoman  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education, and Related  
Agencies  
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education, and Related  
Agencies  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

We are writing to express our support for critically important child sexual abuse prevention research funding in the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill. Additionally, we are encouraged by and would like to thank you for your continued investment in protecting our vulnerable populations from sexual abuse. As you consider priorities for the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Subcommittee, we urge you to appropriate **\$10 million to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control for child sexual abuse prevention research activities in Fiscal Year 2023.**

The CDC estimates that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys will become victims of child sexual abuse, an adverse childhood experience that can impact how they think, feel, and act over their lifetime. Child sexual abuse is associated with long-term physical and mental health issues. A 2018 study estimated that the lifetime economic burden of CSA in the United States was at least \$9.3 billion in 2015; however, because child sexual abuse is underreported, this is likely an underestimate. Additionally, another newly published study found that the United States spends approximately \$5.4 billion *each year* to incarcerate people for sex crimes against children, including \$508 million annually on federal prisoners in 2021. In 2021, Congress appropriated \$1.5 million for child sexual abuse prevention research. That means for every federal dollar spent on research, the United States spent about \$2982 on punishment. Child sexual abuse is indisputably a criminal justice problem as well as a public health problem. Despite the wide-ranging impact of child sexual abuse, there are currently very few scientifically validated prevention interventions. In order to successfully combat child sexual abuse, additional resources to provide evidence-based, proactive intervention remain crucial. Moreover, increased investment in prevention will help ensure the responsibility to stop or report abuse does not rest with children. In the absence of validated prevention efforts, organizations and individuals that work with children developed and implemented idiosyncratic and untested prevention efforts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also clarified just how vulnerable we are without effective prevention programming. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported a nearly 100% increase in online enticement reports and a 63% increase in CyberTipline reports between January and September 2020, compared to the same months in 2019. Likewise, INTERPOL reported increased consumption of child sexual

exploitation and abuse materials among several member countries during the pandemic. In addition to increased online offending, data from US and UK Stop It Now! helplines indicate a surge in requests for help by stepfathers with sexual thoughts about their stepdaughters. These increases are likely due to steep pandemic-related job losses and work-from-home/learn-from-home policies that leave at-risk men who were previously managing their urges with too much time, too much access to children, and too little structure. We can anticipate that risk for online and intra-familial offending will remain high until pre-pandemic employment levels are regained, a process that could take years.

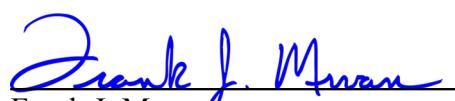
In FY 2020, \$1 million was allocated to the CDC's Division of Violence Prevention, which funded two grants to study perpetration prevention. In FY 2021, the program received an increase to \$1.5 million, and an increase to \$2 million in FY 2022. This early funding is much appreciated; however, achieving prevention at a large scale will require a significant increase in federal investment, not just incremental increases year over year. We must take continued action to ensure the health and safety of children who remain at risk of experiencing sexual abuse. While this issue is largely preventable, regrettably there are substantial gaps in proactively keeping children from harm. A CDC report on the current state of child sexual abuse prevention outlined several serious but addressable gaps in existing research efforts, including:

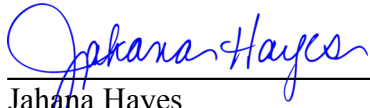
- **Inadequate information on the scope of child sexual abuse victimization** and perpetration. Prevalence estimates provide essential information about where, when, and whom prevention efforts should target, yet there are currently no high-quality perpetration prevalence estimates in the US or elsewhere.
- **Incomplete understanding of factors that lead to child sexual abuse perpetration.** Studies that follow large samples of at-risk individuals over time are needed to identify risk factors that promote offending, as well as protective factors that inhibit offending.
- **Absence of validated prevention strategies.** There is an unmet need to develop, validate, and disseminate effective prevention programs and to ensure that evidence-based interventions make it into the hands of parents, educators, youth-serving organizations, and other stakeholders dedicated to keeping children safe from sexual abuse.

To address these gaps and to keep children safe, we respectfully request that you include \$10 million for research on the primary prevention of child sexual abuse at the CDC in FY 2023, which is vital to protecting children and their quality of life.

Thank you for your support of this initiative.

Sincerely,

  
Frank J. Mrvan  
Member of Congress



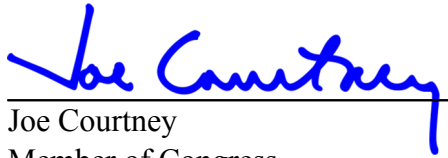
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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



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Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress



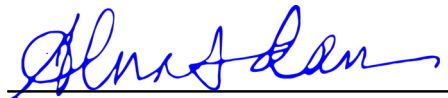
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Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress



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Anthony G. Brown  
Member of Congress



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Al Green  
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Member of Congress



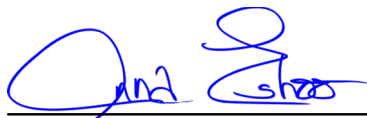
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Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress



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Jackie Speier  
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Pramila Jayapal  
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*Carolyn B. Maloney*

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Carolyn B. Maloney  
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*Josh Gottheimer*

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Josh Gottheimer  
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Abigail Davis Spanberger  
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Karen Bass  
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Member of Congress

*Jamaal Bowman*

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Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.  
Member of Congress

*G. K. Butterfield*

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G. K. Butterfield  
Member of Congress

*André Carson*

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André Carson  
Member of Congress

*Danny K. Davis*

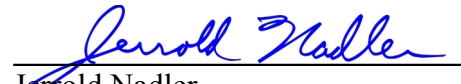
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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



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Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress



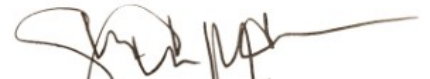
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Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



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Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress



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Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick  
Member of Congress



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Ann McLane Kuster  
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