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RUNAWAY, HOMELESS, AND MISSING CHILDREN: PERSPECTIVES ON HELPING THE NATION'S VULNERABLE YOUTH

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTHY FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

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RUNAWAY, HOMELESS, AND MISSING CHILDREN: PERSPECTIVES ON HELPING THE NATION'S VULNERABLE YOUTH

Tuesday, July 24, 2007
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities
Committee on Education and Labor
Washington, DC

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 3:05 p.m., in Room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Carolyn McCarthy [chairwoman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives McCarthy, Grijalva, Sarbanes, Yarmuth, Lampson, Platts, and Biggert.

Staff present: Aaron Albright, Press Secretary; Tylease Alli, Hearing Clerk; Jody Calemine, Labor Policy Deputy Director; Carlos Fenwick, Policy Advisor, Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions; Michael Gaffin, Staff Assistant, Labor; Lamont Ivey, Staff Assistant, Education; Brian Kennedy, General Counsel; Deborah Koolbeck, Policy Advisor, Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities; Lisette Partelow, Staff Assistant, Education; James Bergeron, Minority Deputy Director of Education and Human Services Policy; Robert Borden, Minority General Counsel; Kathryn Bruns, Minority Legislative Assistant; Cameron Coursen, Minority Assistant Communications Director; Kirsten Duncan, Minority Professional Staff Member; Taylor Hansen, Minority Legislative Assistant; Susan Ross, Minority Director of Education and Human Resources Policy; and Linda Stevens, Minority Chief Clerk/Assistant to the General Counsel.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY [presiding]. A quorum is present. The hearing of the subcommittee will come to order.

Pursuant to committee rule 12-A, any member may submit an opening statement in writing, which will be made part of the permanent record.

Before we begin, I would like everyone to take a moment to ensure that your cell phones and BlackBerrys are on "silent."

I would now like unanimous consent to allow the distinguished gentleman from Texas, Mr. Lampson, to be allowed to join us on the dais today and participate in the hearing.

Without objection, so ordered.

I now recognize myself, followed by the Ranking Member, Mr. Platts, from Pennsylvania, for an opening statement.

I am pleased to welcome you all to the Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities hearing on runaway, homeless and missing children.

I would like to thank the ranking member, Mr. Platts, for his interest in this important subject.

I would also like to thank my two colleagues on the Healthy Families Subcommittee, Mr. Grijalva and Mr. Yarmuth, for their dedication to the issues of runaway and homeless children.

Mr. Grijalva has taken the lead and urged the appropriation to increase funds for runaway and homeless youth programs, with success, this year. Mr. Yarmuth recently held a town-hall to illuminate the issues of runaway and homeless youth in his district in Kentucky.

We are lucky to have such passionate members on this subcommittee, and I look forward to hearing from the witnesses from your districts today.

Later, we would also like to welcome a visitor to hearing today, Mr. Lampson from Texas. We are glad that he will be able to join us later. Mr. Lampson has been personally dedicated to this issue for the last 10 years. He founded the Congressional Missing and Exploited Children's Caucus, which now has over 130 members. Mr. Lampson remains the champion of missing and exploited children in Congress.

We are here today to learn about runaway, homeless and missing children and gain perspectives on how we can help these young people as we begin the reauthorization process.

Although there are no exact figures for the number of runaway and homeless youth in our nation, in 2002 1.6 million young people between the ages of 12 to 17 ran away from home and slept in exposed or poorly sheltered locations.

Runaways may find shelter with a friend or member of the community, but for the children who find themselves on the street, food, shelter, health care, and personal safety needs are not met. Studies of runaway and homeless youth show high rates of emotional and mental health problems. According to the Basic Center Program and Transitional Living Program in 2006, 29 percent were identified as having mental health issues upon exiting care.

In addition, many of the young people who enter shelters have a history with the juvenile justice system, on which we had a hearing just a few weeks ago. These issues are all related, as we have a juvenile correction system that fails to protect youth from shelters and streets.

Runaway children may fall into the missing children category. A study funded by the Department of Justice found that nearly all of the 1.3 million children who went missing in 1999 were reunited with their caretakers.

We will learn of the grassroots activities on these issues, which includes collaboration between those who assist runaway and homeless youth and those who locate missing children.

However, not every child was reunited with caretakers, and that is why we have AMBER alerts, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, a Task Force on Internet Crimes Against Children and Law Enforcement Training Center.

Today's topics are difficult. I am looking forward to learning what we do for our runaway, homeless and missing children and recommendations on what we can do through reauthorization to better serve these young people.

I want to thank all of you for taking the time to be here this afternoon.

And now I yield to Ranking Member Platts for his opening statement.

[The statement of Mrs. McCarthy follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Carolyn McCarthy, Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities

I am pleased to welcome you to the Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities hearing on runaway, homeless, and missing children.

I would like to thank the Ranking Member, Mr. Platts for his interest in this important hearing.

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Today's topics are difficult. I am looking forward to learning what we do for our runaway, homeless, and missing children, and recommendations on what we can do through reauthorization, to better serve these young people.

Mr. PLATTS. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will submit a formal statement for the record, and first just want to commend you for your continuing leadership on issues of importance to our youth, throughout our nation and here, espe-

cially dealing with runaway, homeless and missing children. Your hosting this hearing is going to allow us as a committee to be that much better informed and better prepared as we go into the reauthorization process. So thank you for your leadership.

I also want to reference Mrs. Biggert from Illinois, who is also co-chair of the Missing and Exploited Children's Caucus and has been a great leader on these issues for us on the Republican side.

And, Judy, we are glad to have you here with us, as well.

To our witnesses, each of you bring what will be invaluable knowledge to be shared with us. Through your written testimony that you provided and your oral testimony here today, your life experiences, your expertise in this area is so critical for us being better informed.

I look at our job as Congress men and women as being kind of general practitioner. We need to know a little bit about everything and, as an issue is moving forward, become experts on a few things. And, on this committee, dealing with the needs of our nation's children is one of those areas where we are charged with being more experts. The way we become more expert on these issues is through information shared with us, such as you are going to do today.

So I sincerely thank each of you for being here and for making time in your schedules to participate to help us have the knowledge we need to do right by our nation's children and look forward to your testimony.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[The statement of Mr. Platts follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Todd Russell Platts, Senior Republican Member, Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities

Good afternoon. I'd like to welcome each one of you to this hearing entitled "Runaway, Homeless, and Missing Children: Perspectives on Helping the Nation's Vulnerable Youth." This is the third hearing in a series which we have held that examine the programs authorized by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA). The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and the Missing Children's Assistance Act are Titles III and IV respectively of JJDPA.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act authorizes three grant programs to meet the needs of homeless youth. The first, the Basic Center Program, provides emergency short-term shelter for youth, as well as food, clothing, counseling, and referrals for health care. The second program, the Transitional Living Program, assists older homeless youth in developing skills to promote their independence and prevent future dependency on social services. The final program authorizes funding for Maternal Group Homes, which provide a range of services for young mothers such as childcare, education, job training, and advice on parenting to promote their well-being and success as a parent.

The Missing Children's Assistance Act coordinates the various federal missing children's programs though the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. In addition, it authorizes the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which provides assistance to families and law enforcement officials to help reunite families.

Today, I look forward to hearing from our panel of expert witnesses and learning what their assessments are of the current programs. In Pennsylvania, 40 percent of individuals who become homeless during any given year are youths. It is vital that we provide support early to homeless youth to get them on a path of responsible independence and decrease their risk of entering the juvenile justice system.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the panelists were joining us today. With that, I yield back to Chairwoman McCarthy.

Chairwoman McCarthy. Thank you, Mr. Platts.

And, again, welcome Ms. Biggert. We appreciate you being here. And, also, Mr. Lampson is here.

Without objection, all members will have 14 days to submit additional materials or questions for the hearing record.

Today we will hear from a panel of witnesses.

Your testimonies will proceed in the order of your introduction.

Our first witness, Mr. Chris—I am going to pronounce this wrong—"Kazi" Rolle, comes to us as one of two voices of experience on our panel about homelessness. However, he will also have a message of hope and growth to share through his work on Art Start's Hip-Hop Project, an after-school program for teens which teaches them to turn their life experiences into art through hip-hop. He also has worked on the Hip-Hop Project, which can be seen in the documentary by the same name, with all profits going to support organizations working with young people.

Now I wish to recognize the distinguished gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Grijalva, to introduce the next witness, Ms. Sue Krahe-Eggleston from Arizona.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much, Madam Chair and Ranking Member Platts, for holding this very important hearing.

Today, it is my distinct honor and pleasure to introduce a fellow Tucsonan, Sue Krahe-Eggleston, who is director of Our Family Services back home in Tucson. This service, Our Family, provides a comprehensive range, Madam Chair, of services addressing the needs of at-risk youth, children, families, seniors and works with neighborhoods.

For the past 16 years, Sue, in her capacity as executive director, has helped define back home for the community the needs and the attention and the resources that youth in our community need. For that, we are very grateful for her leadership and for her very strong advocacy.

She is nationally renowned and recognized as an advocate for children and family social services and currently serves as a board member of the National Network for Youth. It is my honor to introduce her.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and look forward to the testimony of all our witnesses and welcome them, as well.

I yield back.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. And I thank you.

Now I wish to recognize the distinguished gentleman from Kentucky, Mr. Yarmuth, to introduce the next witness, Mr. Rusty Booker.

Mr. YARMUTH. Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is my distinct privilege today to introduce a young man of incredible strength and courage, Rusty Booker.

I met Rusty about 3 weeks ago at a forum I hosted on disconnected youth in our mutual hometown of Louisville, Kentucky. Rusty spoke of his experience with abuse, how he ran away at age 12 and about his placement in five different foster homes.

The power of his story comes not simply from the hand that he was dealt but the way that he played it. So often, when we think of disconnected youth, we think, often correctly, of helplessness and victimization.

But this exceptional young man has long since left behind helplessness and the role of a victim. After a childhood of neglect, he took control of his life, set himself on a path toward adult success.

He is determined to get a high school degree and join the police force. Also, at the age of 17, he has dedicated himself to helping others who suffered like he did, reaching out to kids on the street.

Rusty is the success story. I thank him for being here to share his story. He has demonstrated an awful lot of courage in his life and today is one more chapter in displaying courage.

I also want to thank Safe Place for ensuring he could be here today.

I yield back.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you.

Our next witness, Mr. Steve Berg, is the vice president for programs and policy of the National Alliance to End Homelessness. Prior to coming to Washington, Mr. Berg spent 14 years as a legal service attorney. Mr. Berg will speak to us today about what the research on runaway and homeless youth tells us.

Mr. Yarmuth from Kentucky will also introduce our next witness, Mr. Ernie Allen.

Mr. YARMUTH. Thank you again, Madam Chair. It is my big day here today. Big day for Louisville, too.

You would be hard pressed to find someone who so consistently has shown more devotion to the nation's missing and exploited children than the next witness to be introduced.

My friendship with Ernie Allen goes back many years, to his time in Louisville. He has always shown a selfless dedication to serving our community as our city's director of health and public safety, director of our county crime commission and now, as founder, president and CEO of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

He serves all our communities today, having helped recover well over 100,000 missing children, increasing the recovery rate from 62 percent in 1990 to 96 percent today. Not despite, but because of, his success, Ernie knows as well as anyone the vast challenges still ahead of us.

And so, Madam Chair, it is my honor to introduce a true humanitarian and an example for all of us, my friend, Ernie Allen.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you very much.

Now I wish to recognize the distinguished gentleman from Texas and our guest today, Mr. Lampson, to introduce the next witness, Ms. Beth Alberts.

Mr. LAMPSON. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I certainly thank you for allowing me to participate in the hearing today.

As founder and co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Missing and Exploited Children, thanks to the suggestion from Ernie Allen a number of years back, I really am pleased to be able to welcome Beth Alberts here.

Beth is the CEO of Texas Center for the Missing. It is a not-for-profit organization, established in 2000 by Houston executive Doreen Wise in memory of her son, Gabriel, after his 4-month disappearance and tragic loss. The center has one goal: to keep vulnerable children and adults safe.

And since July 2001, Ms. Alberts has served as the director of the Houston Regional AMBER Plan, the largest regional AMBER Alert system in the country.

Ms. Alberts also serves as the coordinator for both the Southeast Texas Child Abduction Response team, which is a multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline team of 70 different agencies prepared to respond to endangered/missing child cases, and the Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance, a consortium of volunteer search and rescue teams and missing children's organizations, providing support to law enforcement agencies and families of the missing.

Ms. Alberts serves as the secretary of the board of AMECO, Inc.—it is an international consortium of missing children's organizations—and is a board member of the Harris County Department of Education's Safe and Secure Schools and sits on the Children's Assessment Center Partnership Council.

A busy, busy lady, one that we have tremendous appreciation for her for caring, for her willingness to help and give back so much of herself and for being here today.

Welcome.

And, thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. And I thank you.

For those of you that have not testified before, you will see in front of you a lighting system. Each witness will be able to speak for 5 minutes. The warning lights are green. Then, when you have yellow, you have a minute left. When it turns red, I will let you go a little bit, but if you go too long, you will hear a light tapping, which will get louder.

That goes the same for the members sitting at the dais. Especially for us, right?

The first witness we want to hear from is Mr. Rolle, if you would?

STATEMENTS OF CHRIS "KAZI ROLLE", CREATOR, ART START'S HIP–HOP PROJECT

Mr. ROLLE. Mike check, one, two, one, two. Peace and love.

My name is Kazi, also known as Chris Rolle. I was born on a little island called Nassau, in the Bahamas. My mother was a Jamaican immigrant who was trying to get to America, because it was easier for a Bahamian to get to America than coming straight from Jamaica.

At 6 months of age, she left on that journey and left me with her friend. Her friend and her husband were very abusive. And I lived there for 4 years. And at 4 years old, I was found wandering the streets, and, subsequently, the Department of Social Services in the Bahamas took me out of that home and placed me in the Children's Emergency Hostel for orphans.

Catherine Brown, who was a social worker there, she and I developed a relationship, and in 1982 I was fostered by her and her family. And the adjustment was very difficult. I had numerous behavioral problems. I always like to say she tried to give me heaven and I gave her hell.

But she trucked on with me, and I was officially adopted in 1988, on November 4th, still posing a lot of behavioral challenges. And

the family didn't have the know-how or the resources to provide me with the emotional healing and help that I needed.

And, in 1990, I was forced to have to go back to the orphanage. And in the orphanage, all the boys in my room, we got in trouble and we were asked to leave the orphanage. Some kids were adopted, and I went on to a psychiatric ward for unruly children.

While I was there, the psychiatrist, his analysis came to the conclusion that a lot of the stuff I was dealing with was based on the fact that I missed my mother. I couldn't understand why these strangers were doing so much for me and my own mother could give me away.

So we contacted the American embassy, sent a letter to her and found that she wanted me. We sent a one-way ticket, and I came here on December 22nd, to America, in 1990.

We had a tumultuous reunion, and I found myself 2 years later on the streets of Brooklyn. Wherever I laid my head was my home, and got in a lot of trouble.

I was involved in street pharmaceutical corporations and family organizations that were one color, if you understand what I am saying. And they were my family.

After being incarcerated a few times, I decided that I needed to get my life together, and I leaned on the people and the resources that I knew. I was a part of a theater company called Tomorrow's Future Theater Company, Elaine Robinson, and she helped me to get into a school called Public School Repertory Company, which was a last-chance high school for kids who were interested in the arts.

There I found a guy by the name of Scott Rosenberg, who founded an organization called Art Start, which was an arts education organization. And he just gave me the opportunity to just use my voice and use music and art. And I found that it was really a healing tool, to be able to put my life and all the things I was going through in music and art.

I created a play called "Brooklyn Story," and I shared it with people across the tri-state, and it moved a lot of young people. And just to put it out there, I think that was the beginning of my healing and a change for my life.

Scott also supported me in creating my own program, because I made a commitment that I have got to give back. I understand what these kids are going through and I understand the journey, now. And I need to give back the same way that there were people along the way that took the time out to give to me.

In 1995, I appeared on numerous shows for just gaining all these awards and recognition for doing all of this work. In 2000, I made it all the way to the Oprah Winfrey Show, to basically just say that this young brother has overcome some obstacles and was once homeless and now speaks at Harvard and across the world about how hip-hop can really heal and change lives.

In 2007, this year, May 11th, a movie was released, executive produced by Bruce Willis and Queen Latifah, that chronicled my journey and the creation of this program, and a lot of lives were moved based on that.

I am here today to just basically say that the step-parents, the organizations like Art Start, like the Hip-Hop Project, Network for

Youth, all of the programs across the country that are trying to really reach our missing children, kids like myself, who were homeless and living in orphanages, they need the resources.

They need the resources to do this work, because I could have been that kid crawling through somebody's window or robbing somebody, because when you don't have, you have to try to get it by any means necessary. And the only reason there was a change in my life, because there were programs and there were people and institutions that had some type of resources and a heart to try to help me.

And those people need the resources and help to continue to do that work, because all young people need a place to call home.

[The statement of Mr. Rolle follows:]

Prepared Statement of Chris "Kazi" Rolle, Creator, Art Start's Hip-Hop Project

I was born in a little Island called Nassau in the Bahamas. My mother was a Jamaican immigrant who was trying to get to Amercia via the Bahamas , due the fact there were less obstacles for Bahamians seeking to come to United States than there were for people coming from here country.

At 6months old, my mother left me in the care of friends to venture to the United States in hopes of opportunity. She had left three kids before with my grandmother in Jamaica. She never returned for me. In 1980, the Bahamian Department of Social Services substantiated reports that I was living in an abusive situation. At four years old, I was found wandering in the streets of and was subsequently institutionalized at the Children's Emergency Hostel for orphans.

Catherine Brown, a social worker at the hostel, developed a relationship with me and in 1982, I was fostered by here and her family. The adjustment was very difficult—they said that I presented numerous behavioral problems at home and in school, as I could not understand how strangers could love me when my own mother abandoned him. Thank fully Mrs. Brown trucked on. I was officially adopted on November 4th 1988.

I still got into a lot of trouble and posed ongoing challenges. Due to lack of the proper resource to help me with my emotional issues, the family came their wits end in dealing with me. In 1990, I was placed in the Ranfurly Home for Children. While in the Ranfurly Home, I was placed in a psychiatric ward for unruly children. It was determined by the Department of Social Services that my challenges were directly related to my early childhood experiences—as a result, the American Embassy was contacted to locate my biological mother and on December 21, 1990, reunited with her in New York City, USA.

From 1990-1992, I's relationship with my biological mother was highly tumultuous. By 1992, at age 16, I found himself homeless once again, on the streets of New York City. From 1992-1994, Wherever I laid my head was my home. Gangs were my family. Warm train station was my apartment. Street Pharmaceutical Corporations became was my employers. Five discount was how I shopped for clothing. It was all bout survival. I found my self incarserated numerous time. I was on a road to nowhere. All the people who said that I wouldn't amount to nothing were being proved right.

In 1994, at age 18, I finally decided to get my life together. I enrolled in Public School Repertory Company, a "last chance" performing arts high school and I discovered that I had a passion for music and theatre, and realized the power of the arts as an outlet for healing. I wrote a play based on my life story called a Brooklyn Story.

At Public School Repertory, I connected with Art Start—an arts-based youth organization he also began writing, directing and acting for the award winning urban theater company, Tomorrow's Future. My play, A Brooklyn Story, earned me a New York Governor's Citation and a Martin Luther King, Jr. Award. In 1995, I received the CBS Fulfilling the Dream Award for my play and my work in schools and homeless shelters advocating education and drug abuse prevention.

In 1999, having personally experienced the healing power of the arts, I chose to dedicate my life to providing a similar outlet for under-served youth. I created The Hip Hop Project, an award-winning program that connects New York City teens to music industry professionals to write, produce and market their own compilation album on youth issues. The program attracted Russell Simmons and Bruce Willis,

whose support contributed largely the success of the program. In 2000 I was featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show in a segment called People Who Are Using Their Lives. In 2005 he passed the torch of leadership of the Hip Hop Project one of my students, and joined the organization's Board of Trustees.

I say all of this to say that I was that kid. Homeless. No where to go. Pocket had rabbit ears. I had nothing. I was at the bottom. Rock bottom. Being homeless. Not have a family. Not having resources, influenced my choices. If no one was there to give it to me, I am going to have to take it. Steal it. Whatever. By any means necessary. You feel me?

We need more support for the programs like Art Start, Tomorrow's Future theater group, The Hip Hop Project and all of the wonderful people who take their time to help people like myself.

We also need to get the word out in a big way to caring community members, parents, and young people themselves that millions of youth experience homelessness in the United States each year. All of the step and extend family members who step up to the plate, they need all the support, resources and services available to assist them. These programs, families and those working to bring about awareness desperately need federal funding, cause these are expensive undertakings. Every youth in the nation deserves a place to call home.

[Additional material submitted by Mr. Rolle follows:]

Please Join Us for

Shining the Light on Youth Homelessness

A Reception by the National Network for Youth
with Honorary Co-sponsors
Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy & Congressman Todd R. Platts

Presenting Clips from

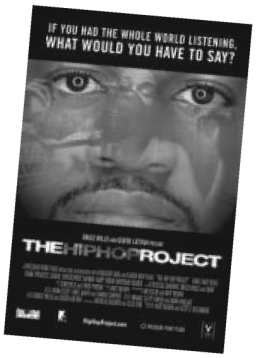
The Hip Hop Project*

*Proceeds from the film go to support organizations serving homeless youth.

Kazi and a panel of homeless youth will speak

Tuesday, July 24, 2007 • 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Rayburn House Office Building • Room B369
U.S. House of Representatives



NNFY NATIONAL NETWORK FOR Youth We are their community

***The Hip Hop Project* is** a feature-length documentary released this spring about Chris "Kazi" Rolle, a formerly homeless youth who created an award-winning artist development program that connects teens to music industry professionals to write, produce, and market their own music.

Food for this event is sponsored by Youthcare, Seattle WA

Chairwoman McCARTHY. I thank you for that testimony.

Mrs. Eggleston?

STATEMENT OF SUE KRAHE–EGGLESTON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OUR FAMILY SERVICES

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. Good afternoon.

In addition to serving as the Our Family executive director, I am also a member of the board of directors of the National Network for Youth, the nation's leading organization on youth homelessness. I am testifying on behalf of both organizations today.

Our Family delivers the full continuum of runaway and homeless youth programs, including a street outreach program, a drop-in center, a shelter and family reunification program for minor-age youth, a transitional living program for older youth and supervised apartments for homeless young families.

My agency could not offer this programming without the federal RHY funds. Arizona only appropriates a small amount of targeted money for homeless youth, but many states do nothing. The national system of support for this population is wholly reliant on federal funds. Accordingly, RHY must be reauthorized.

In addition, Congress should raise authorization and appropriation levels, both to start new programs in underserved communities, as well as provide a cost of living increase to current grantees, which have operated at the same funding levels year after year after year, despite inflation.

The causal factors for homelessness among young people in Tucson match those across the country. Our agency has supported youth in all manners of dire circumstances, and I want to give you some examples.

There is a 14-year-old boy named John, who felt safer living in a tunnel than with his abusive parents. Then, there is a 16-year-old gay young person by the name of Paul dropped off at our shelter by his mom, with his belongings in a plastic bag, saying to us, "Take him."

Then think about Angie, a young mom standing outside the hospital in Tucson with her four-pound little infant, not knowing where she was going to go. Then, lastly, there is Precious, a 21-year-old mom of two, living in her car because the children's father had been incarcerated.

These are all stories of Tucson, but they could be stories of any community across our country.

Yet we also see incredible resilience in our youth, young people whose running away is an expression of their most basic right to survive, young people seeking better options, young people craving for caring adults and supportive peers for the first time, or longing to mend those old family ties.

Our Family helps youth tap their inherent strength and mobilize those assets for the youth's recovery and ultimate well-being.

Now, turning to policy considerations, my written statement includes 18 of the RHY reauthorization recommendations that the National Network of Youth has put together. They are the outcome of a consultation process we took with the grantee community.

I will mention just two. First, we recommend the act require a process for developing performance standards for RHY programs so that all grantees would work towards common performance expectations. Secondly, RHY grantees seek a process to request reconsideration of unsuccessful applications when there is a good cause.

We look forward to working with Representative Yarmuth and the subcommittee leadership in developing the RHY reauthorization bill. To complement RHY, we call on Congress to pass measures that respond to the needs of homeless youth, which surpass the scope of the RHY.

Among them, Congress should pass Representative Biggert's forthcoming Homeless Education Bill. Also, Congress should pass H.R. 601, the Homeless Student Aid Bill.

RHY programs have never intended to be the tools to end youth homelessness. The act forms the safety net for unaccompanied youth and must be continued, with increased funding. But if we are to prevent and end youth homelessness, we must go way beyond RHY.

We need more publicly funded resources for family substance abuse, mental health and strengthening of family services. We need a child welfare systems that permits youth to remain in care until they research the developmental age of adulthood, rather than the artificial legal age of majority.

We need to support reentry of youthful offenders, such as the one that Representative Grijalva will be proposing. Permanent housing targeted to youth is also required.

We are pleased to support Representative Hinojosa's forthcoming Place to Call Home Act. It contains the solutions I just identified and much, much more. It is a policy blueprint for preventing and ending youth homelessness. We call on Congress to follow its design.

Youth-serving organizations, young people and concerned community members will continue to fight for the day when there will be indeed a place to call home for all youth. Until then, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act must remain available for the millions of young people in America each year without a safe place to live.

And I thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Krahe-Eggleston follows:]

Prepared Statement of Sue Krahe-Eggleston, Executive Director, Our Family

Part I—About Our Family

Sue Krahe-Eggleston is the Executive Director of Our Family, a community-based organization in Tucson, Pima County Arizona which offers services in four main areas, including youth services. Youth programs include street outreach, youth center, shelter, and transitional living for runaway and homeless youth.

Part II—Unaccompanied Youth Primer

Runaway and homeless youth are the most vulnerable of our nation's disconnected youth. Between one million and three million U.S. youth experience an unaccompanied situation annually. Unaccompanied youth become detached from parents, guardians and other caring adults due to a combination of family and community stressors. Data specific to Pima County also point to large numbers of homeless, at-risk youth in the region, with the same causal factors and risk factors as their peers nationally.

Part III—Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Reauthorization

The federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) has established funding streams to support outreach, family reunification, shelter, and transitional living programs targeted to unaccompanied youth, all in an effort to provide a basic level of support for these vulnerable young people regardless of the state in which they are living.

Federal RHYA programs are a substantial and reliable funding stream to Our Family and other RHYA grantees. For organizations in many states, RHYA funds are the only resources available explicitly to serve unaccompanied youth. RHYA is the sole federal law targeted solely to unaccompanied youth. Without RHYA, many unaccompanied youth in communities across the nation would go completely without support.

Our Family urges Congress to reauthorize and strengthen the programs and authorities of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. We offer 18 recommendations for RHYA reauthorization. These recommendations were identified after an intensive consultation process with the RHYA grantee community convened by the National Network for Youth, the membership association of RHYA agencies.

Part IV—Beyond RHYA

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, while a critical federal law that must be continued and fully funded, is no substitute for the aggressive interventions necessary to eliminate the very factors causing unaccompanied situations among millions of the nation's youth, or to respond to the resources and services needs of currently unaccompanied youth that surpass the scope and purpose of the Act. We call for action in juvenile justice, elementary and secondary education, postsecondary education, workforce investment, and other areas. We support the Place to Call Home Act.

Part I—About Our Family

Our Family makes Southern Arizona a better place to live, to grow up, and to grow older with a continuum of services to people in every stage of life. Last year, more than 29,000 at-risk children, youth, families, seniors and disabled adults used our services, which include counseling, education and mediation, housing, mediation and help for people in crisis.

Our Family provides services in four main areas—counseling, education and prevention, youth services, and services to older and disabled adults.

Our youth services include:

• Teens in Transition helps homeless and near-homeless youth 13-21 stay in school and gain the skills to succeed, through case management, counseling, education and career planning, housing, and help with basic needs.

• Reunion House offers brief-stay shelter, respite and family reunification services to youth ages 12-17, including systems youth who are awaiting placement and homeless youth who want to come off the street.

• CommonUnity is a complex of safe, supervised apartments and a community of support for homeless young mothers ages 18-21 with up to two children. Life-skills classes and case management help residents break cycles of poverty and crisis and create a support network among themselves.

• Skrappy's is a drug- and alcohol-free youth center. Young people from all backgrounds participate in youth-led media arts and theater projects, dance classes, health fairs, volunteer projects and community activism, as well as concerts.

• Street Outreach goes where homeless, runaway and street youth gather and helps them come off the streets.

Of the more than 29,000 individuals who used Our Family's services last year, six percent were age 12 or under, 54 percent were 13-17, 16 percent were 18-21, 18 percent were 22-59, and 6 percent were 60 or older.

Our Family is a $4.2 million organization with 100 employees, as well as an active corps of volunteers. It is accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children Inc. and licensed as a behavioral healthcare institution by the Arizona Department of Health Services. Services are available in English and Spanish.

Our Family, created in October 2005 by the merger of Family Counseling Agency and OUR TOWN, has a combined history of more than 75 years of service to the greater Tucson community.

Our Family invites Members of Congress and Congressional staff in Arizona or visiting the Tucson area to visit our agency. For more information, please visit www.ourfamilyservices.org or call (520) 323-1708.

Part II—Unaccompanied Youth Primer

Unaccompanied Youth Basics

Runaway and homeless youth are the most vulnerable of our nation's "disconnected" youth. We refer to these two populations collectively as "unaccompanied youth." Like other disconnected youth, unaccompanied youth experience separation from one or more of the key societal institutions of family, school, community, and the workplace. Their disconnection is accentuated by their lack of a permanent place to live, which is not only disruptive in and of itself, but also indicative of the larger socioeconomic instability they are experiencing.

Between one million and three million of our nation's youth experience an unaccompanied situation annually, according to various estimates derived from government studies and data sets. Some of these estimates do not include young adults ages 18 and older within their scope.

Unaccompanied youth become detached from parents, guardians and other caring adults—legally, economically, and emotionally—due to a combination of family and community stressors.

Family Stressors—Many of our nation's unaccompanied youth are compelled to leave their home environments prematurely due to severe family conflict, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse by an adult in the home, parental neglect, parental substance abuse, or parental mental illness. For other youth, the values and traditions with which their families operate prescribe that the young person separate economically from the family unit upon reaching the legal age of majority or after graduation, in some cases regardless of whether the youth is actually prepared for independent adulthood. Others are expelled from the home due to parental inability to accept the sexual orientation, parenting status, mental or addictive disability, or normal adolescent behavior of their child. For still other young people, their families are simply too poor to continue to bear the financial burden of providing for the youth's basic needs. Others are abandoned as their parents are incarcerated. Youth in families that are experiencing homelessness may be separated from the family unit—and become homeless on their own—so that emergency shelter or domestic violence services can be secured for the remaining family members, or to squeeze most of the family into means of habitation that are too small for all of its members.

Community Stressors—State custodial systems—including child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health, addiction treatment, and developmental disabilities—which have responsibility for ensuring the safety and protection of children and youth who are not properly cared for by parents and guardians—are failing in general to accept older youth into their custody due to financial limitations and policy disincentives. Many of the young people who do come in contact with public custodial systems are not adequately prepared for independence and residential stability during their period of custody nor provided an aftercare arrangement to support them after the custodial relationship has ended. Many of these young people have no home environment to which to return. Youth with mental illness, addiction, and other disabilities face discrimination when searching for an independent living arrangement.

Many unaccompanied youth who are psychosocially prepared for independent adulthood are not economically ready for self-sufficiency. Inadequate educational preparation, lack of employment skills, short or non-existent work histories, language barriers, and undocumented immigration status all contribute to the relegation of many youth to unemployment or to low-wage jobs—neither of which generate income sufficient for acquiring affordable housing.

Policy barriers also stand in the way of permanency for unaccompanied youth. In some jurisdictions, youth below the age of majority are prohibited from entering into leases or other contracts on their own behalf. "One strike" laws prohibit individuals with criminal histories from residency in public and assisted housing and prohibit juvenile ex-offenders from returning to their families. And, federal, state, and local public and assisted housing programs rank young people low, if at all, among their priority populations for assistance.

Regardless of the causal factor, unaccompanied youth, when left to fend for themselves without support, experience poor health, educational, and workforce outcomes which imperil their prospects for positive adulthood. This results in their long-term dependency on or involvement in public health, social service, emergency assistance, and corrections systems.

Youth Homelessness in Arizona and in Pima County

Youth Homelessness in Arizona

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Extranet Optimized Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (NEO-RHYMIS), 943 youth were involved with Runaway and Homeless Youth Act emergency (BCP) and transitional (TLP) programs in Arizona in the 2004-2005 federal fiscal year. Of this population, 67 percent were white, 6 percent were American Indian, 0.42 percent were Asian, 10 percent were African American, 0.32 percent were Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 16 percent did not report racial information. Within the population of those reporting ethnicity (804), 14 percent were Hispanic. 42 percent were male and 58 percent were female. Girls are more prevalent in every age group of youth except for youth under the age of 12, where there are more boys than girls. The vast majority (81 percent) of Arizona youth who receive services through a BCP or TLP in that same time period entered the program from a private residence; more than half of these youth came from the home of a parent or legal guardian. Two percent of youth came from correctional institutions, two percent came from residential programs, four percent came from other shelters, two percent came from other living situations, less than one percent came from the military, and 10 percent came from the streets. 53 percent were at-

tending school regularly, and 3 percent had already graduated or obtained a GED. The rest were not regularly attending school. 24 youth seeking BCP or TLP services in Arizona were turned away during this time period.

Youth Homelessness in Pima County

Data specific to Pima County also point to the large numbers of homeless, at-risk youth in our region. Pima County demonstrates a number of factors that indicate significant need for the proposed services. First, there is a high number of runaways in our county. In 2003, 3,036 runaways were reported in Pima County, accounting for 20 percent of all juvenile crime reported. This number amounts to two percent of Pima County's total juvenile population. Second, runaways face a pervasive drug economy in our region. The county lies 70 miles from the Mexican border in a high impact drug corridor. Drugs flow across the border and are distributed nationwide. Runaway and homeless youth, always at risk for involvement in drug use and drug sales, are at an especially high risk in Pima County.

Tucson's need for Runaway and Homeless Youth services is further demonstrated by a Homeless Youth Survey administered in the spring of 2005 by the Tucson Planning Council for the Homeless Youth Committee and Arizona State University's School of Social Work. Information was gathered through 30 minute in-person and telephone interviews using an 18 page questionnaire that covered the following domains: demographics; housing and living situations; education; employment and income sources; sexual orientation, practices and risk behaviors and abuse; physical health, mental health, and substance abuse; use of, access to, and knowledge about community services, modes of transportation, social networks and personal issues; and personal/familial legal concerns. In total 458 surveys were completed. The information obtained indicates, from the youth themselves, what are the most pressing issues for Tucson's runaway and homeless youth. (Homeless in Tucson by LeCroy and Milligan, 2005.)

Homeless youth interviewed ranged from 13-18 years old and were predominantly Hispanic/Latino/a or white, heterosexual, non-married and female. The majority of youth (76 percent) lived in Tucson before becoming homeless. Over 60 percent of the youth had been homeless at least twice during their young lives, with an average 3.5 times in 2005, up from 1.92 times in 2002. Over half of the youth had spent at least one year of their life homeless and, at the time of the survey, half had been homeless for more than 180 days. The average age at which youth first became homeless was 14. Nine percent self-reported homosexuality and 7 percent reported bisexuality. The main reasons cited for leaving home the first time included running away because of problems (24 percent), being removed by Child Protective Services (21 percent), and being kicked out or told to leave the home (20 percent). Over 75 percent of the youth said they would not continue to be homeless if they had a choice.

Forty percent of the youth spent the night prior to the interview at a friend's house, 14 percent spent the night in an unstable environment (e.g., park, wash, car, street, backyard), and 13 percent spent the night at a family member's house. Notably, 10 percent of the youth did not know where they would be sleeping the night of the interview. Half of the youth (50 percent) were currently enrolled in school or some other type of educational/training program, down slightly from 2002 when 56 percent of youth surveyed were enrolled in school and/or an educational program. Of those not currently attending school, the main reasons reported were lack of a permanent address and/or difficulties with transportation.

Many of the youth had experienced significant trauma before age 18, and were still suffering its effects. 63 percent reported experiencing verbal/emotional abuse, 52 percent said they had witnessed domestic violence occur in their household, 50 percent reported witnessing drug/alcohol abuse, 44 percent reported experiencing physical abuse, 42 percent experienced neglect, and 25 percent reported being sexually abused (19 percent of females, 6 percent of males) before the age of 18. When asked whether abuse/neglect was ever a factor in their leaving home, 60 percent of the youth said yes. Alarmingly, 28 percent said that they had attempted suicide in the past, up from 19.5 percent in 2002. These statistics substantiate the tenuous, high-risk situation that faces RHY in Tucson, the risk factors they face for having unsuccessful adulthoods, and the critical nature of getting services to them.

Our Family's Homeless Youth Profile

Data collected on homeless clients who received case management services at Our Family between 7/1/05 and 6/30/06 (n=82) reflect similar patterns to the County and the State. The average number of runaway episodes was four. The current status of youth entering the program included: 35 percent at home; 35 percent runaway; 17 percent homeless; 9 percent throwaway, 8 percent other/street. Substance use

was a prevalent problem indicated at intake: 35 percent smoke cigarettes; 55 percent use beer, wine or wine coolers; 45 percent use hard liquor; 35 percent had 5 or more servings of alcohol on the same occasion; 40 percent use marijuana; 10 percent use cocaine; 10 percent use methamphetamines, 5 percent use over the counter drugs above recommended dosage; 2 percent use inhalants; 40 percent use alcohol and marijuana on the same occasion; 5 percent used two or more drugs (excluding alcohol and tobacco) on the same occasion; 30 percent have been asked to sell drugs and 12 percent have sold drugs. Approximately 30 percent of the youth said they had been physically abused by a parent or guardian. 5 percent reported being sexually abused by parents and another 12 percent reported being sexually abused by a parent's partner. Almost all of them listed emotional abuse, and 30 percent said that a household member abused alcohol or drugs. In addition 30 percent had poor grades in school, 60 percent had been charged with a misdemeanor, 5 percent with a felony, and 26 percent were depressed.

Trends in Homeless Youth Population Observed by Our Family

Our Family's Reunion House Basic Center Program (RH) has seen double the number of youth 12-17 who are school dropouts at intake. These young people have been absent from educational services often for a semester or more and as such are a grade or two behind their peers. A number of these youth profess to have no desire to continue their education, seeing school as a useless and stressful environment.

Our Family's Teens In Transition TLP (TNT) has noted a continuing high demand from couples coming in for services where the female is significantly younger than the male. Because of the male partner's age these couples are unable to access housing options and homeless couples services targeted to underage youth. There appears to be no defined reason for this shift but it is noteworthy and provides a considerable challenge when attempting to provide housing for these individuals and their children.

Our Family's CommonUnity TLP (CUP) has continued to see increasing numbers of 22-24 year old mothers and their infant children on street who are coming in to seek services. CUP must turn these mothers away, as they are too old for the program. They are referred out to other providers who often have considerable waiting lists or are limited in their effectiveness with younger adults. Domestic and Relationship Violence issues remain prevalent, with approximately 92 percent of the young parents coming into CUP dealing with the effects of relationship and domestic violence in their lives.

The Street Outreach Program (SO) continued to see an increase in the number of youth dealing with death or loss of a parent or guardian in their lives due to substance abuse. In many cases these issues directly relate to the initial destabilization of the youth with their families.

The Homeless Youth Services at Our Family continued to see a steady increase in the numbers of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) youth requesting services. This is due in part to increased awareness through outreach to LGBT organizations as well as establishing a positive rapport and reputation among LGBT youth. This also highlights the number of LGBT youth who run away, are kicked out, or who otherwise become homeless and need the services we offer.

CommonUnity and Teens in Transition Programs have seen increases in the number of parenting youth that have inquired about transitional/independent living services.

Tucson youth service providers also report an explosion of methamphetamine use—a trend mirrored nationally.

Barriers Facing Pima County Homeless Youth

The Homeless Youth Committee of the Pima County, Arizona Plan to End Homelessness has identified the following major barriers that impede homeless youth in their transition back to permanent housing and to successful adulthoods. (Plan to End Homelessness, Pima County, Arizona, Spring 2006.)

- While Tucson's youth services are extensive, they are not enough to meet these needs. Homeless youth ages 18 through 24 have few, if any, emergency and transitional housing options. Whether they are "legally" adults (i.e. over 18) or not, Pima County homeless youth are at best uncomfortable, and at worst subject to victimization, in adult shelters or service environments.
- Youth of all ages have almost no affordable addiction treatment options: in part because there is little funding to serve them, in part because agencies which do offer youth treatment are oversubscribed, and in part because youth simply do not feel comfortable engaging in therapeutic environments with older adults.

• LGBT youth, many of whom have already been victimized, have no dedicated, safe emergency or transitional housing alternatives.

• And all youth making a transition to independence need serious—and now seriously underfunded—life and job skills training, adequate housing, and often counseling.

Our Family has identified the following additional barriers, based on our observation of the daily struggles of our residents and program participants:

• Some homeless youth and young adults are unable to access HUD-funded homeless assistance services because their homeless living arrangement, usually "couch surfing," does not qualify as "homeless" under the HUD definition.

• Many of our participants are unable to pursue the postsecondary education and training they desire—and that is imperative to move them to high-wage employment in high-growth sectors—because they must forego education in order to maintain employment, which is their sole source of income.

• Homeless young families expend considerable resources on childcare; subsidized child care slots are precious in our community.

• Permanent housing to which our youth may transition is in short supply. Youth and young adults are low on priority lists, or even the community's radar screen as a subpopulation in need of housing assistance.

• Youth access to mental health services is a major challenge; there is simply insufficient publicly funded mental health treatment and support options for adolescents and for adults.

• Reentry of youth offenders into the community is uneven, and certainly far behind in program development compared to the system of support for transitioning foster youth.

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Program Basics

The federal government, through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) has established funding streams to support outreach, family reunification, shelter, and transitional living programs targeted to unaccompanied youth, all in an effort to provide a basic level of support for these vulnerable young people regardless of the state in which they are living. RHYA programs have the purposes of preventing victimization and ensuring basic safety of unaccompanied youth and ensuring their access to family reunification, housing, education, employment training, health care, and other social services.

The RHYA Basic Center Program (BCP) provides grants to community-based, faith-based, and public organizations to support family strengthening efforts, including counseling, home-based services for families with children at risk of separation from the family, and emergency and respite shelter (no greater than 15 days) for youth under the age of 18.

The RHYA Transitional Living Program (TLP) provides competitive grants to community-based, faith-based, and public organizations to support longer-term residential services (up to 18 months) and life skill supports to youth ages 16 through 21 who are unable to return home safely. TLPs assist youth in successfully transitioning into responsible adulthood and self-sufficiency and connecting them to education, workforce, and other supports. This program includes maternity group homes, which are residential arrangements for pregnant and parenting youth who are fleeing from abusive homes. Maternity group homes assist these youth in accessing housing, prenatal care, parenting classes, child care, and educational services.

The RHYA Street Outreach Program (SOP) provides competitive grants to community-based and faith-based organizations to support street-based outreach and education to homeless children and youth who have been sexually abused or who are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation.

RHYA basic centers and transitional living projects serve nearly 50,000 youth in all 50 states. RHYA street outreach projects make over 2.3 million contacts with youth annually.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act also authorizes funds for the National Runaway Switchboard, a national communications system for runaway youth and their families; regional training and technical assistance for grantees; an information clearinghouse; a management information system; research and evaluation; and peer monitoring of grantees.

Congress first enacted the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act in 1974 as Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. It was most recently reauthorized in 2003. RHYA programs are administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Part III—Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Reauthorization

Need for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

Federal RHYA programs are a substantial and reliable funding stream to Our Family and other RHYA grantees. For organizations in many states, RHYA funds are the only resources available to serve unaccompanied youth explicitly. More important, they are the sole federal programs targeted to unaccompanied youth. Without RHYA, many unaccompanied youth in communities across the nation would go completely without support.

More RHYA Capacity is Needed across the Nation. The basic living needs of too many of our nation's unaccompanied youth are not being met through state and local child welfare systems or permanent housing and homeless assistance programs. Furthermore, few states have established funding streams targeted to unaccompanied youth. RHYA basic center and transitional living projects served approximately 55,000 youth in FY 2005, yet estimates of the U.S. unaccompanied youth population are one million at minimum, suggesting that at least approximately 950,000 of the nation's unaccompanied youth are not able to access RHYA services.

Effectiveness of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

RHYA Projects are Cost Effective Alternatives to Custodial Care and Arrest. The average cost of serving a youth in a transitional living project of $11,877 is less than half the minimum cost of serving youth through the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, with annual costs ranging from $25,000—$55,000 per youth depending on the state. Law enforcement officials are the referral source for 20 percent of youth entering basic centers.

RHYA Projects Use Federal Funds to Leverage Community Resources. RHYA projects succeed due to partnerships created among families, schools, community-based organizations, faith communities, law enforcement agencies, businesses and volunteers.

RHYA Projects Raise the Achievement Level of Unaccompanied Youth. The last federally-funded evaluations of the Basic Center Program and the Transitional Living Program found that they produced positive outcomes for participating youth in the following areas:

Family Strengthening

- Basic center youth reported lessened rates of family conflict and parental physical abuse.
- Transitional living youth reported that the program helped them better manage communication and maintain positive relationships with their families.

Education

- School participation among basic center youth doubled after basic center services commenced, compared to the participation rate 30 days prior to accessing a basic center.
- The proportion of youth in transitional living projects attending college was three times that of homeless youth who were not in a TLP.

Employment

- Employment rates of youth in basic centers increased by 24 percent.
- 60 percent of transitional living youth were employed part-time or full-time, compared to 41 percent of homeless youth not participating in a TLP.

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Reauthorization Recommendations

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act is scheduled to sunset in 2008 and merits extension. In addition, new issues affecting unaccompanied youth and unaccompanied youth service providers have emerged that require a Congressional response. Our Family urges Congress to reauthorize and strengthen the programs and authorities of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act in a timely manner. We offer the following recommendations for RHYA reauthorization. These recommendations were identified after an intensive consultation process with the RHYA grantee community.

Funding

1. Reauthorize and increase authorization levels for Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs. The runaway and homeless youth consolidated account should be authorized at the $200 million level in FY 2009 and "such sums as may be necessary" in each of FY 2010 through FY 2013. The runaway prevention account should be authorized at the $30 million level in FY 2009 and "such sums as may be necessary" in each of FY 2010 through FY 2013.

Funding levels for RHYA programs are inadequate for meeting the need for such services. With estimates of unaccompanied youth at the low-end of one million, and the RHYA basic center and transitional living programs reaching only 55,000 youth annual, at least 900,000 of the nation's unaccompanied youth do not have access to the supports and services that RHYA programs offer. For these unserved youth, their unaccompanied episodes are prolonged; they are at heightened risk of victimization, poor health, school failure, and unemployment; and they are thwarted from attaining safe, productive, and healthy adulthoods.

2. Increase the RHYA Basic Center Program allotments for small states and for territories. The minimum BCP allotment for states with small youth populations should be increased to $200,000. The maximum BCP allotment for U.S. territories should be increased to at least $100,000.

BCP formula allotments to states with small youth populations are limited to $100,000. This amount makes it difficult for HHS to fund more than one basic center in each such state, even though the geographic swath of many such states tends to be wide. BCP allotments to territories are limited to $40,000. This amount is hardly enough to act even as seed money for basic centers in territories to leverage non-RHYA funds.

3. Permit HHS to redistribute unexpended BCP funds to other BCP applicants for a one-year grant period, after which time the amount should be returned to the BCP general pool for re-allocation. RHYA grantees and applicants would benefit from greater transparency and standardization in the manner in which HHS reallocates "unrequested" BCP allotments from states lacking applicants to "excess" BCP applicants from states with qualified applicants requesting a total of funds that exceed the state's allotment.

RHYA Project Admission and Length of Stay Criteria

4. Limit basic centers to providing shelter services to individuals who are less than 18 years of age, with an exception that basic centers located in states with child-caring facility licensure laws that permit a higher age may serve up to the age permitted by the state law. RHYA grantees and applicants would benefit from clarification on the maximum age of youth permitted to receive emergency shelter through a basic center. The current RHYA permits basic centers to provide emergency shelter to youth "not more than 18 years of age," which some interpret to mean ages 17 and under and others interpret to mean through age 18. To resolve confusion in the field, we recommend that the maximum age for emergency shelter services through a BCP be extended to youth "who are less than 18 years of age," which is in alignment with the maximum age used in the formula for allocating BCP funds. However, grantees should be given the discretion to serve youth over age 17 if the child-caring facility licensure law in which the basic center is located permits a higher age.

5. Allow extensions in length of stay in basic centers from 14 days to up to 30 days and in transitional living projects from 18 months through 24 months, on a case-by-case basis, provided that the state child-caring facility licensure law applicable to the basic center permits a longer length of stay. RHYA grantees report difficulty in ensuring safe exists for some of their program participants within the timeframes required by current law. The grantees then find themselves in the situation of either keeping the participant at the basic center or transitional living project with other than federal funds, or triggering an unsafe exit by the youth. Providing grantees limited flexibility to keep some of their participants in service beyond the target exit period would allow a greater level of individualized support for those unaccompanied youth at greatest risk of unsafe program exits.

RHYA Applicant Eligibility, Use of Funds, and Funding Conditions

6. Add public entities as eligible applicants for Street Outreach Program funds. Eligibility for the Street Outreach Program (SOP) is limited to private nonprofit organizations, whereas public organizations as well as private nonprofit organizations may apply for BCP and TLP funds. Extending SOP eligibility to public organizations would provide public entities receiving either BCP and/or TLP funds the opportunity to build a longer continuum of RHYA services by also competing for SOP funds.

7. Clarify that RHYA funds are to be distributed to organizations and not directly to program participants. The President's FY 2007 budget request included a proposal to reserve a portion of Transitional Living Program (TLP) funds for vouchers directly to participants to purchase maternity group home services on their own. Appropriations Committees in both chambers the 109th Congress, in consultation with their authorization committee counterparts, concluded that a voucher arrangement was neither contemplated by the statute nor in the best interest of either the pregnant and parenting youth or unaccompanied youth service providers. Accordingly,

the committees rejected the proposal in report language to accompany the FY 2007 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bills. Current law should be amended to clarify that RHYA funds are to be made available for distribution to organizations and not directly to program participants.

8. Allow transitional living projects to use RHYA funds for facility renovation. Renovation costs should not exceed 15 percent of the total first-year award. The current RHYA permits use of BCP funds for facility renovation, but does not permit TLP funds to be used for facility renovation. A parallel use of funds for renovation should be extended to TLP grantees.

9. Require basic centers and transitional living projects to have in place written emergency management and crisis response plans as a condition for receiving federal RHYA awards. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita focused national attention on the need to ensure more effective responses to emergencies and crises, including by congregate care providers. The 109th Congress recently amended the Older Americans Act and the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act to ensure that federally-funded congregate care providers funded through these programs have emergency management and crisis plans in place. A parallel requirement should be established for RHYA basic centers and transitional living projects.

Federal Program Management

10. Require HHS to develop performance standards for RHYA direct service grantees. The HHS Secretary shall provide an opportunity for public comment on the performance standards. At one time, HHS had developed program performance standards for basic centers, and was in process of developing program performance standards for TLP and SOP grantees. These standards provided guidance to grantees on the minimum expectations of program performance. HHS has suspended standards development or activation lacking clear instruction in the RHYA statute to support them.

11. Require HHS to develop a process for accepting and considering appeals for reconsideration from unsuccessful RHYA applicants. The HHS Secretary shall provide an opportunity for public comment on the appeals process. The RHYA statute does not prescribe, and HHS has not established, an orderly process for accepting or considering appeals for reconsideration from unsuccessful RHYA applicants. Lack of a formal process has led to lack of transparency whether or how reconsiderations are made.

12. Add a finding on the applicability of positive youth development to the organization and delivery of services to unaccompanied youth. Inclusion of a finding on positive youth development in the RHYA statute is important for encouraging grantees to apply youth development principles to the development and implementation of their projects.

13. Add a statutory definition of "runaway youth" identical to the definition of such term in the Code of Federal Regulations. The RHYA statute does not include a definition of "runaway youth." However that term is defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 1351.1) as "a person under 18 years of age who absents himself or herself from home or place of legal residence without the permission of his or her family." For the convenience of policymakers, RHYA grantees, and the general public, the current regulatory definition of "runaway youth" should be inserted into statute.

National Activities

14. Require HHS to develop each fifth year, directly or via contract, a national estimate of the prevalence of unaccompanied situations among youth and young adults. The nation lacks a single, reliable source of data on the prevalence of unaccompanied situations among youth. The dearth of data impairs federal, state, and local public policy decision-making, community needs assessment, service organization and delivery, and performance measurement.

15. Require HHS to establish research, evaluation, and demonstration priorities each two years and to provide an opportunity for public comment on such priorities. The RHYA grants HHS authority to make grants for research, evaluation, demonstration and service projects. RHYA grantees, youth, advocates, and other stakeholders have limited to no input into the identification or prioritization of issues to be studied or evaluated.

16. Require HHS to conduct, directly or via contract, a study demonstrating the economic and social benefit of providing emergency housing, transitional housing, permanent housing and supportive services to unaccompanied youth, and the extent to which that housing and services offsets the costs of allowing such conditions to persist for young people. While it is intuitive that interventions which resolve unaccompanied situations among youth are more cost-effective to the public in the long-

term than ignoring the problem, there is yet to be conducted an authoritative cost-benefit analysis to "prove" this assertion. A cost-benefit study would be instructive to policymakers about the type and level of investments in health and human needs programs for children, youth, and families.

17. Authorize HHS to conduct, directly or via contract, a public information campaign to raise awareness of the unaccompanied youth population and their service and support needs. Unaccompanied youth are a largely invisible or misunderstood population. Lack of public awareness of this group of young people, their life circumstances, and the interventions available to support them and end their homeless situations, allows homelessness to persist among the nation's youth.

18. Amend the Higher Education Act to authorize forgiveness of educational loans for workers in RHYA grantees with at least five consecutive years of service. Nonprofit and public organizations supporting unaccompanied youth face a number of workforce challenges, including difficulty recruiting and retaining employees for long terms of service, compensating employees at competitive wages, and attracting employees with postsecondary education. Student loan forgiveness is a strategy that has been deployed with success in other sectors to recruit and retain workers in shortage occupations and should be extended to the unaccompanied youth service sector.

PART IV—Beyond RHYA

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, while a critical federal law that must be continued and fully funded, is no substitute for the aggressive health and human needs interventions necessary to eliminate the very factors causing unaccompanied situations among millions of the nation's youth, or to respond to the resources and services needs of currently unaccompanied youth that surpass the scope and purpose of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. A comprehensive response to the causal factors of and ultimate solutions to unaccompanied situations among youth is required. We call the Education and Labor Committee's attention to a number of opportunities beyond RHYA reauthorization within its jurisdiction where decisive impact could be made for unaccompanied youth.

Juvenile Justice

There is a clear intersection between the juvenile justice system and youth homelessness, in terms of both youth entry into the system due to their homeless and youth exit from the system into homelessness. We urge the Committee to use the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act to break the connection between juvenile justice and youth homelessness. We call for repeal of the valid court order exception to the JJDPA deinstitutionalization of status offenders requirement. We also call for the establishment of a youth offender reentry grants program.

Elementary and Secondary Education

Youth experiencing homelessness encounter difficulties enrolling in and attending School. These barriers include legal guardianship requirements, residency requirements, lack of necessary immunization, academic, or other records, and inadequate transportation to their schools of origin from their temporary living arrangements. As a result, many homeless young people struggle in obtaining education, or fall out of the educational system altogether. Congress has responded to the educational needs of homeless children and youth by establishing laws and a grant program (the EHCY program) which ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness shall have a right to enroll, attend, and succeed in school. We urge Congress to reauthorize and strengthen the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program during No Child Left Behind reauthorization.

Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary education offers students experiencing homelessness and others hope for escaping poverty as adults. The Higher Education Act has the potential to assist disconnected youth to graduate from high school, apply for and access postsecondary education, and complete their degrees—if they can access the network of HEA programs and services. The most basic access barrier facing homeless students is the very ability to apply for student financial assistance. We

Urge Congress to approve the FAFSA Fix for Homeless Kids Act (H.R. 601, Biggert), legislation that would allow youth to be considered independent students for purposes of applying for financial aid (the Federal Application for Federal Student Aid) if they have been verified as an unaccompanied homeless youth by a school district homeless liaison, shelter director, or financial aid administrator.

We also encourage the establishment of a supportive services program for disconnected postsecondary students and the establishment of a grant program to colleges

and universities so that they may assist homeless students in retaining campus or off-site housing during periods when the institutions are closed.

Workforce Investment

Income is a necessary tool which unaccompanied youth must possess in order for them to pay for housing and thus exit homelessness. Workforce services for youth entail far more than job readiness training and job placement. Because of their developmental stage, youth require comprehensive, intensive employment and training programs that involve the following: job skill training, including classroom training, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships; training in life skills and work-related values; exploration of life options, including career paths that are non-traditional for a youth's gender, race, culture and/or social class; meaningful connections between youth and their peers, adults, and communities; opportunities for youth to assume leadership roles and develop responsibility, self-reliance, initiative and the desire and ability to participate in decisions affecting their lives; opportunities that take into account the life circumstances of youth, such as housing, health, and transportation; and connections to postsecondary education and training opportunities. Like other systems, unaccompanied youth are experiencing difficulty accessing workforce services in their communities. We urge the Committee to use the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act to help connect unaccompanied youth to the workforce. We ask that runaway and homeless youth organizations be added as members of local Youth Councils. We also call for an assurance that Youth Councils permit unaccompanied youth to participate in workforce services without parental consent.

Place to Call Home Act

In February 2007, the National Network for Youth announced a long-term campaign to end youth homelessness. A Place to Call Home: The National Network for Youth's Permanency Plan for Unaccompanied Youth. Our Family supports the Place to Call Home Campaign.

The signature public policy component of the campaign is the Place to Call Home Act, comprehensive legislation to prevent, respond to, and end runaway and homeless situations among youth. The bill includes provisions in the homeless assistance, housing, child welfare, juvenile justice, public health, education, workforce investment, teen parenting, and immigration areas. Representative Rubén Hinojosa (D-TX) will introduce the bill imminently. We encourage Members of Congress to join as original co-sponsors to the Place to Call Home Act.

Chairwoman McCARTHY. Thank you very much.

Mr. Booker?

STATEMENT OF RUSTY BOOKER, FORMERLY HOMELESS YOUTH

Mr. BOOKER. Hi. My name is Rusty Booker. I am 17. I was born and raised in Louisville, Kentucky. I just want to thank all of you for giving me an opportunity to share my story with you.

I was born to a mom, 17. Living with my mom and stepfather was difficult. My stepfather came home every night drunk and would beat my mom. My brother and I didn't sleep well, not knowing if we would be next.

At age 8, my parents finally divorced, and my mom started drinking. She never laid a hand on my brother and I. Drinking was her way of forgetting the past.

I was sent with my stepfather and his wife at age 9. The abuse soon started afterwards. My brother soon came afterwards. I was placed in foster care and then, very quickly and unbelievably, back with my stepfather.

Months after I was placed back with my stepfather, I started sending letters to my previous foster family from an abandoned house's mailbox, so my stepparents wouldn't know. A month or so after the letters, I built the courage to run.

I contacted my previous foster family, and they told me to look for a Safe Place instead of going back home. I went to a library that had a Safe Place sign on the front. I was 12 at the time, and until that day didn't know what Safe Place was but glad that there was a public place, like the library, where I could get help.

They took me to the YMCA Safe Place Services shelter in Louisville. When I got to the shelter, the staff welcomed me. I felt safe for the first time in many years.

They did an intake, provided me clothes, hygiene products and clean linens. The next morning, I had a warm breakfast and I met with a caseworker who would change my life forever, Mr. Bill.

When we talked, at first I had a hard time connecting with him and getting solutions, but it wasn't long before I was sharing my life story with him. The shelter determined that going home was not going to be possible, and I understood.

Within 2 weeks, they arranged for me to be placed in a foster home with a loving family. But I still had problems, and over the next several years I was placed in psychiatric hospitals and along with that came therapy and meds.

Then came another foster home, group homes, even jail. I started using drugs. And, after witnessing my friend get shot in a deal gone bad, I thought to myself, "Nobody asked me what I wanted." I felt like I was to blame, and powerless to change my life. I had no family, no home and, at this rate, no future.

After another failed foster home, I went to Safe Place again and asked for help. I knew the shelter was there for me. Again I felt safe and understood. I met with Ms. Missy and told her everything that I had been through. She didn't judge me or laugh at me. She understood me and made me feel wanted.

The next day I met Mr. Quan, a man with a story for every lesson he learned that I needed to learn or had already but in a rougher way. He, too, understood me. He has taught me very many ways of how to not let little things get blown way out of proportion.

And then there is Mr. Bill. When I met with him again after several years, I gave him a hug. I felt so relieved to see someone I knew that really cared about me and loved me more than anyone I knew at the time.

I am not really going to put his business out on Front Street, but I will say that he has been through a huge amount of things that other kids and myself can relate to.

Mr. Bill, Ms. Missy and Mr. Quan and the other wonderful and amazing staff at Safe Place Services are keeping me drug-and alcohol-free. I don't know the last time I have felt this good about myself.

To some, these people I mentioned may just be ordinary people, but to me and 600 other kids a year in Louisville, these people are heroes. Mr. Bill even gave up his vacation to bring me to D.C. so I could testify.

There are 14 kids at the Safe Place Services right now who have experienced many of the same things that I have. I would like to be able to convince kids that Safe Place is a first step to getting help and the shelter is a place where they can feel safe and begin to solve their problems.

Many times, when I was younger, I wanted to run for help, but when I was in a rural area there weren't many places to go. Louisville is a smaller city, compared to here in D.C. or L.A. or even Atlanta.

Kids all around the country, thousands of kids, feel like I did. No one understands them, and they need a place to turn. I hope that they, too, will be able to get to find a Safe Place site, get to a shelter, feel safe and have a bed, a warm meal and someone to talk to instead of roaming the streets or bumming money.

I am asking for your help to make a difference for kids just like me, because every kid deserves a second chance. I plan to finish my GED and plan to go to college and get a degree in law enforcement.

Thank you for letting me share the experiences I have had. I know I am headed in the right direction. I used to always ask myself, "Why me?" Maybe this is why. Maybe what I have been through can make a difference for someone else. I hope you will make it possible for kids like me to have these programs in their city.

Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Booker follows:]

Prepared Statement of Rusty Booker, Formerly Homeless Youth

My name is Rusty Booker. I'm 17 years old. I was born and raised in Louisville, KY. I just want to thank all of you for giving me an opportunity to share the story of my life with you.

My life was never easy. I was born to a mom of 17. Living with my mother and stepfather was so difficult. My stepfather came home every night, got drunk and beat my mom. My brother and I didn't sleep well not knowing if we would be next. At age eight my parents divorced and my mom started drinking. She never laid a hand on my brother and me. Drinking was her way of forgetting the past. I was sent to live with my stepfather and his wife at age nine. The abuse started then. Belts, ping pong paddles, even his hand all against flesh. I wouldn't be able to sit while my bottom and legs were marked with bruises. My brother soon came afterwards. I was placed in foster care and then back with my stepfather. Months after I was placed back with my stepfather. I started sending letters to my previous foster family from an abandoned house's mailbox so my stepparents wouldn't know. A month or so after the letters, I had built the courage to run.

I contacted my previous foster family and they told me to look for a Safe Place instead of going back home. I went to a library that had a Safe Place sign on the front. I was 12 at the time and until that day didn't know what Safe Place was but was glad that there was a place like the library where I could get help. They took me to the YMCA Safe Place Services shelter in Louisville. When I got to the shelter the staff welcomed me. I felt safe for the first time in many years. They did an intake and got me clothes, hygiene products and clean linens. The next morning I had a warm breakfast and it was good. I met with a caseworker who would change my life forever—Mr. Bill. When we talked, at first I had a hard time connecting with him and getting solutions, but it wasn't long before I was sharing my life's story with him.

The shelter determined that going home was not going to be possible and I understood. Within two weeks, they arranged for me to be placed in a foster home with a loving family. But I still had problems and over the next several years, I was placed in a psychiatric hospital and along with that came therapy and meds. Then came another foster home, group homes, even jail. I started using drugs and after witnessing my friend getting shot because of drugs, I thought to myself, nobody asked me what I wanted. I felt like I was to blame and was powerless to change my life. I had no family, no home and at this rate, no future. After another failed foster home, I went to Safe Place again and asked for help.

I knew the shelter was there for me. Again I felt safe and understood. I met with Ms. Missy and told her everything that I had been through. She didn't judge me or laugh at me. She understood me and made me feel wanted. The next day I met Mr. Quan, a man with a story for every lesson he learned that I needed to learn

or had already but in a rougher way. He too, understood me. He has taught me very many ways of how to not let little things get blown way out of proportion. And then there is Mr. Bill. When I saw him again after several years, I gave him a hug. I felt so relieved to see someone I knew that really cared about me and loved me more than anyone I know. I'm not really going to put his business out to the public, but I will say that he has been through a huge amount of things that other kids and me can relate to. Bill, Ms. Missy and Mr. Quan and the other wonderful and amazing staff at Safe Place Services are keeping me drug and alcohol free. I don't know the last time I have felt this good about myself.

To some, these people I mentioned may just be ordinary people, but to me and six hundred other kids a year in Louisville, these people are heroes. Mr. Bill even gave up his vacation to bring me to DC so I could testify today.

There are 14 kids at the Safe Place Services right now who have experienced many of the same things that I have. I would like to be able to convince kids that Safe Place is a first step to get help and the shelter is a place where they can feel safe and begin to solve their problems. Many times when I was younger, I wanted to run for help, but when I was in a rural area there weren't many places to go. Louisville is a smaller city compared to here in DC or LA or even Atlanta. Kids all around the country, thousands of kids, feel like I did. No one understands them and they need a place to turn. I hope that they, too, will be able to get to find Safe Place sites to get to a shelter, feel safe, and have a bed, food, someone to talk to instead of roaming the streets, bumming money or doing anything just to survive.

I'm asking for your help to make a difference for kids just like me, because every kid deserves a second chance. I plan to finish my GED and plan to go to college and get a degree in law enforcement. Thank you for letting me share the experiences I have had. I know I'm headed in the right direction. I used to always ask myself "Why me?" Maybe this is why. Maybe what I have been through can make a difference for someone else. I hope you will make it possible for kids like me to have these programs in their city.

[Additional material submitted by Mr. Booker follows:]

National Safe Place

Safe Place offers the first step to help for any young person at risk of abuse, neglect or serious problems. The testimony presented by Rusty Booker to the US House of Representatives, Healthy Families and Communities subcommittee of the Labor and Education Committee addressing Runaway and Homeless Youth issues represents just one young man who was the victim of serious circumstances and made the decision to ask for help. His courage and determination to alter the path on which he was headed represents that of many other young people. More than 205,000 youth have also made the decision to seek help at a Safe Place location or contacted a youth shelter agency after learning about Safe Place at their school.

Businesses and community buildings such as fire stations and libraries are designated as "Safe Place" sites. Any youth in crisis can walk into one of the nearly 16,000 Safe Places across the country and ask an employee for help. These locations display the yellow, diamond-shaped Safe Place sign on their location. Inside, employees are trained and prepared to assist any young person asking for help. Youth who go to a Safe Place location are quickly connected to the nearby youth shelter. The shelter then provides the counseling and support necessary to reunify family members and develop a plan to address the issues presented by the youth and family.

In addition to providing youth in crisis immediate access to help and safety at community locations, the visibility of Safe Place signs makes the community more aware of some of the issues that young people experience. As consumers enter their neighborhood market or convenience store, the Safe Place sign is a constant reminder that keeping young people safe is everyone's responsibility. Safe Place provides an opportunity for the entire community to get involved in helping to solve some of the serious issues that face young people and getting their life back on track. According to Suzanne Quinlan, Human Resources Director for Louisville area Dairy Queen corporate stores, "You could not pay us enough to take down the Safe Place sign. Even if we only get one child, it is important that both kids and parents can easily find Safe Places."

The success of Safe Place is based on public/private collaborations between businesses, school systems, fire departments, law enforcement, and a network of volunteers. An estimated 250,000 employees at Safe Place locations nationally are trained and ready to help a child or teen. Transit systems in 45 cities designate their buses

as mobile Safe Place sites. When a youth boards a bus asking for help, the driver contacts the dispatch office and a trained supervisor is immediately sent to transport the youth to the shelter.

National Safe Place, headquartered in Louisville, KY provides youth shelters across the nation with the infrastructure, materials and training to establish and maintain a Safe Place program. Agencies operating Safe Place receive all of the tools for successful implementation. National corporations such as Sprint, Southwest Airlines, and CSX partner with National Safe Place to offer support benefiting youth in Safe Place communities through cause marketing campaigns, awareness and education initiatives and in-kind contributions.

National Safe Place currently partners with 140 shelters in 40 states. An equal number of runaway youth shelters could establish the program, but have not because of limited resources. Safe Place expands the reach of youth shelters, offering additional front doors in the community where a youth can get help in his or her own neighborhood. Often young people must quickly run from a dangerous or threatening situation. Having a Safe Place nearby makes it possible for them to do so.

Safe Place is a proven, nationally recognized program. Its success is contingent upon each generation of young people understanding that the Safe Place sign is a symbol of immediate help and safety and that seeking help is a better resolution to their crisis than running. Efforts must be made to bring Safe Place to the 10 states where it is not available and to incorporate this outreach program within more shelters. Safe Place is a cost-effective initiative. Businesses and public organizations are willing to support the program to foster the safety of young people and the community. Safe Place also empowers young people to seek help earlier in their crisis before it escalates; thus it is easier for shelter staffs to affect a positive resolution in a shorter period of time. In many instances, it eliminates inappropriate placements in the juvenile justice or other such systems, saving tax payer dollars.

Rusty Booker testified on behalf of other runaway and homeless youth in similar situations. We must make an effort to raise the awareness of the services provided by runaway and homeless youth shelters. Safe Place does that. An investment of resources for Safe Place will benefit many other young people like Rusty.

Chairwoman McCARTHY. Thank you, Rusty.

Mr. Berg?

STATEMENT OF STEVEN R. BERG, VICE PRESIDENT FOR PROGRAMS AND POLICY, NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS

Mr. BERG. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you.

I would like just start by saying thank you for holding this hearing. I know every person who is on this panel who has done specific things to move this issue forward, move the issue of homelessness forward. And we are grateful for that and for what so many other members of Congress have done.

I am here to talk a little bit about some of the research numbers about this problem. We have submitted our written testimony, which I would refer people to. Part of that is a bibliography which makes a pretty good reading list for people who want to dip into the issue even further.

Let me just make a few quick points here, by way of summary. The first point, it is a couple of bad news and a couple pieces of good news.

The first piece of bad news is this is a sizable problem. I mean, the number you recited, 1.6 million people, young people, every year, this does not include people who are staying with relatives or staying with friends. It is young people who are in shelters, who are on the streets or who are staying temporarily with strangers in often dire circumstances.

A striking finding of the research is that for more than half of these young people, no one was looking for them while they were going through this experience. There were not people making police reports or posting things. They were on their own, in many cases, abandoned by families or what supports they had.

And the other thing is substantially fewer than half were in shelters during these experiences. The rest, a small number of the 1.6 million, was living with strangers. For the most part, young people were surviving on the streets. They were surviving in abandoned buildings. They were surviving outside.

The second piece of bad, but mixed, news is that many of the young people how have these experiences, there are mixed and complex and difficult histories. Severe conflict within the family is a near-universal experience. Also prevalent are issues of abuse and neglect, issues of abandonment, issues of substance abuse, more often with the parents than with young people. Issues of mental health and poverty is a common occurrence.

The involvement with the juvenile justice system is very common. The involvement with the child welfare system is very common. These add up to the fact that prevention of homelessness for young people, while extremely important and, the research shows, doable, is difficult.

The good news, and I hope you take this from the hearing and the witnesses that have preceded me, is that young people are resilient. They go through these experiences, but the research shows what many people who work in the field know from experience, which is that despite incredible hardship and incredible experiences, people, when they are given the chance, do recover from the trauma and do go on to lead very useful and, indeed, in many cases, exemplary lives.

The other piece of good news is we have a pretty clear idea of what the interventions are that bring about those good results. We could always have more on this, and one of the probably areas where there is more research needed is sort of individual rigorous evaluations of individual program models.

But, from the research that exists, we see that a stable residence, a connection and attachment to a caring adult and the supportive services that build on the strength of these young people and that address the problems that they have get good results. So sort of programmatically, we are aware of the answers and we can put them into place.

The final point I would like to make, and the research bears this out, is the urgency of this question. I think sometimes in this day and age we are all a little too used to the idea of homelessness and have lost, to some extent, the idea that homelessness for anyone is an immediate and crucial problem that needs to be dealt with as a crisis, an individual emergency in each case.

I think certainly for young people this is the case. I think the stories you hear will back this up. What I can say about the research is, the longer young people stay homeless, the worse their troubles get.

Every night is an additional risk of drug abuse and addiction, of being the victims of crime or of turning to crime, of sexual abuse, of physical abuse. Every night that young people stay homeless in-

creases the risk of deteriorating mental health conditions, higher risks of suicide, the longer people stay homeless.

These are young people who are in grave danger. But, on the other hand, every night, young people are moved from the streets into programs that prevent those dire consequences from happening. We know what the programs are. We have good federal policies in place.

We will be working with the committee staff to make them even better through reauthorization, but the main point is we need to get behind these programs and make sure they are funded and available to everyone.

Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Berg follows:]

Prepared Statement of Steven R. Berg, Vice President for Programs and Policy, National Alliance to End Homelessness

Thank you, Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts, and the honorable members of this subcommittee on behalf of our Board of Directors and partner members for providing this opportunity to address the subcommittee on research findings concerning youth homelessness in the United States. I would like to start by congratulating this subcommittee on its important work in addressing the need of homeless and other vulnerable youth in our nation. The National Alliance to End Homelessness believes that ending youth homelessness is well within our reach. The population is small enough for our collective effort to eradicate this social crisis among our states.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that was founded in 1983 by a group of leaders deeply disturbed by the appearance of thousands of Americans living on the streets of our nation. We have committed ourselves to finding permanent solutions to homelessness. Our bipartisan Board of Directors and our 5,000 nonprofit, faith-based, private and public sector partners across the country devote ourselves to the affordable housing, access to services, and livable incomes that will end homelessness. The Alliance is recognized for its organization and dissemination of evidence-based research to encourage best practices and high standards in the field of homelessness prevention and intervention and we wish to share our insights with you today.

As our name implies, our primary focus is ending homelessness, not simply making it easier to live with. We take this idea very seriously. There is nothing inevitable about youth homelessness in the United States. We know more about youth homelessness and how to address it than we ever have before, thanks in part to extensive research. We know a great deal about the pathways into homelessness for youth, the characteristics of youth who experience homelessness, and interventions and program models which are effective in offering youth reconnection to family, community, and stable housing.

We have been asked today to summarize the research available on the characteristics and experiences of homeless youth, the causes of youth homelessness, and the solutions to youth homelessness. We will also point out the limitations of the research, and identify some research questions that we believe need to be addressed.

Overview of research

Demographics and Experiences of Youth Homelessness

Homeless youth are typically defined as unaccompanied youth aged 12 to 24 years who do not have familial support and are unaccompanied, and who are living in shelters, on the streets, in a range of places not meant for human habitation (e.g. cars, abandoned buildings) or in others' homes for short periods under circumstances that make the situation highly unstable (so-called "couch surfing"). Youth homelessness is essentially caused by a breakdown in families, where environments of abuse, neglect, or youth abandonment are exacerbated by larger systemic issues such as poverty, unemployment, poor housing, and lack of community and economic support in rural and urban neighborhoods. Youth turn to shelters and the streets as an often rational choice to avoid violence, abuse, neglect, and abandonment but the alternative can be hard lives riddled with poor health and exploitation by unscrupulous adults.

Two major incident studies by the U.S. Department of Justice and Professor Ringwalt and colleagues estimate that the number of youth below the age of 18 who

flee from their home, are barred from home by their guardian, or experience homelessness ranges from 1.6 to 1.7 million in the course of a year. Additionally, an unknown number of young adults aged 18 to 24 experience homelessness each year. Some youth will remain away from their home for only short periods of time (a few nights) while others will experience long periods of homelessness and become street-dependent. Street-dependent youth often sleep exclusively outdoors, in public places, or in abandoned buildings, form their own unique culture and family structure with other street-dependent youth, and often rely on street economies such as prostitution, drug sales, theft, or begging to meet their basic needs. However, street-dependent youth represent a small minority of the total homeless youth population. Local programs funded by the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (Department of Health and Human Services) served over 500,000 homeless and runaway youth in 2005. Homeless youth can be found in urban, suburban, and rural areas through the United States and few differences have been found when urban, suburban, and rural youth are compared.

A 1999 study by the U.S. Department of Justice, the Second National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children, estimated 1,682,900 youth had a runaway/throwaway episode that year. Of these youth, 37 percent were actively sought by their caretakers and 21 percent were reported to authorities for purposes of locating them. This study underscores that a majority of runaway and homeless youth (63 percent) are never reported or sought after by their parents or primary caretakers.

There is little gender disparity among various homeless youth groups, except that youth living on the streets are more likely to be male. While youth from all races and cultures run away, become homeless or are thrown away by parents, shelter and housing programs report a significant disproportionate representation of American Indian and African-American youth.

Also, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth have been found to be overrepresented in homeless and street populations with estimates ranging from 11 to 35 percent. Compared to heterosexual homeless youth, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender homeless youth also are exposed to greater victimization while on the streets.

Background information on homeless youth show that they tend to come from low-income communities and their families are disproportionately poor or working class. Many grew up in single-parent households or blended families.

Contrary to stereotypes about homeless youth, studies have not consistently shown that substance abuse is characteristic of a majority of runaway youth. While many studies show use and abuse of drugs or alcohol, research is inconclusive that homeless youth are more prone to dependency. However, studies of homeless youth have shown high rates of parental alcohol or drug abuse (24 to 44 percent) which likely contributes to youth homelessness. Additionally, most homeless youth are still in school but may have experienced difficulties, discipline actions, and delays. One 2005 study showed that 79 percent of youth were attending school on a regular basis before entering shelter.

Additionally, homeless youth are at elevated risk for mood disorders, suicide attempts, and post-traumatic stress disorder. High rates of behavioral disorders are also noted. Regardless of the assessment method used or the sample, homeless youth are more likely to experience mental health and behavioral disorders than adolescents in the general population.

Numerous studies have indicated that once homeless, youth often engage in sexual behaviors that put them at high risk for both sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. Most studies indicate that a portion of the homeless youth population engages in survival sex which is the trading of sexual acts for basic needs like a place to stay. A significant number of homeless girls are also pregnant or parenting. One national, representative sample study published in the American Journal of Adolescent Health found that 48 percent of street youth and 33 percent of shelter youth had histories of pregnancy or impregnating someone, as compared to 10 percent of a nationally representative sample of housed youth.

Homeless youth may be characterized by the length of time spent homeless—recent runaways, transitionally or episodically homeless, homeless and shelter using youth, and street-dependent youth who may travel. Evidence suggests that differences may exist between subtypes of homeless youth, and therefore, unique, targeted interventions may be merited.

In summary, research has given us insight into some fairly constant variables that cut across most homeless youth groups. The common characteristics of their experience prior to becoming homeless include:

- Abuse and neglect histories
- Parental alcohol and substance abuse

- Poverty (except runaways)
- Broken family relationships (single parent, blended, or no parental contact)
- Severe family conflict
- Difficulty with educational success and advancement despite enrollment in school.

Research has also given us a warning that the longer youth remain homeless, the greater their likelihood of experience a host of troubles, including:

- High rates of sexual activity
- Acute medical problems
- Alcoholism and alcohol/chemical addiction
- HIV
- Mental health diagnosis & institutionalization
- Suicide
- Physical violence
- Sexual assault.

Pathways to Homelessness for Youth

Research offers information about the pathways into homelessness for youth. Studies show that there are often multiple factors which cause a youth to leave home: severe family conflict, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, substance abuse, mental health disabilities, and abandonment. Youth consistently report severe family conflict as the primary reason for their homelessness but also report multiple barriers to reunification. Behavioral issues on the part of the youth may be a source of the conflict, but this is certainly not always the case.

Beyond the individual and family problems, youth homelessness is also fed by lack of affordable housing, poverty, and child welfare and juvenile correction systems that fail to protect youth from shelters and the streets.

A sizable minority of homeless youth have had histories of foster care or juvenile justice placements and still end up homeless before their 18th birthday. According to the 2007 National Symposium on Homelessness Research, the percentage of homeless youth who report previous placement in foster care or an institutional setting ranged between 21 and 53 percent across studies. A longitudinal study by the University of Chicago found that 14 percent of former foster youth became homeless after being discharged from care. Another large representative sample study of foster youth aging out of care by Professors Fowler and Ahmed noted that 17 percent of homeless youth had experienced literal homelessness during the 3.6 years after exiting care. One predictor of future homelessness for foster youth is whether the youth had repeatedly run away from placement. By contrast, feeling very close to at least one family member reduced the odds of becoming homeless by nearly 80 percent.

Homelessness may not be a surprising result given the multiple placements and school transfers experienced by foster youth. One study by Casey Family Programs found that more than 30 percent of foster youth experienced eight or more placements with foster families and group homes and a majority experienced seven or more school changes between elementary and high school age. In addition to residential instability, many foster youth face mental health problems and developmental or behavioral challenges. The Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study by Casey Family Programs found that foster youth experience anxiety disorders, depression, panic disorders, and social phobias at two to four times the rate of the general population.

Solutions to Youth Homelessness

There is a growing body of evidence about what works. We know interventions that work to restore youth and offer them a pathway out of homelessness. The past ten years of research and study have provided some indication of methodologies which result in positive outcomes for youth to prevent or end homelessness.

Most homeless youth do not experience long-term homelessness. Homeless youth often go home, find relatives, or make it on their own as young adults. In a 2004 study by Professor Paul Toro of 249 homeless youth as compared to a matched sample of 149 housed youth, ages 13 and 17 years, conducted longitudinally over seven years, most of the adolescents returned fairly quickly to their family of origin. Nearly 93 percent were no longer homeless after seven years of study. However, not all were successfully reunified with parents. One third lived with their families, about 20 percent lived with relatives or friends, and over a third (34 percent) lived on their own. Therefore, the pathway out of homelessness sometimes focuses on parents, sometimes focuses on kin and extended family, and sometimes focuses on independent living.

Studies of what works focus on three areas. The first is early intervention/prevention that seeks to avert a homelessness episode or to ensure that a family separation does not result in an out-of-home placement that so often leads to long term homelessness. The second is interventions with youth who are already homeless, to rapidly reunite them with their families while strengthening the families to achieve more stability. The third is independent housing options other than reunification for youth who will not be able to return to their families. The implication of these three strategies is that the first and best option is to try to reconnect youth with their families, and only after this fails should independent living options be considered.

Initial early intervention and prevention services which focus on mental health and family systems can often meet the crisis needs of a family and prevent homelessness and/or foster care placement.

Two forms of mental health services have been identified that show positive results in decreasing youth anti-social behavior and aggression: multisystemic therapy (MST) and functional family therapy (FFT). Both have indicated that youth recipients have significantly fewer out-of-home placements and decreased recidivism to the juvenile justice system.

Multisystemic Therapy is an intensive family- and community-based treatment that addresses multiple aspects of serious antisocial behavior in adolescents. MST uses family members to design the treatment plan and attempts to encourage behavior changes by using strengths in various areas of the youth's life (family, peers, school, and neighborhood). Evaluations of MST have demonstrated the following benefits:

- decreased recidivism and re-arrests;
- reduced adolescent alcohol and drug use;
- reduced long-term rates of crime for serious juvenile offenders;
- improvements in family functioning;
- decreased behavior and mental health problems for youth; and
- favorable outcomes at cost savings in comparison with usual mental health and juvenile justice services.

Functional Family Therapy is so named to identify the family as the primary focus of intervention. Therapists employing FFT believe they must do more than simply stop antisocial or unhealthy behavior, they must motivate families to change by identifying their strengths, helping build on those strengths in ways that enhance self respect, and offering recommendations on particular pathways for improvement. Data show that when compared with other forms of community intervention like probation support, residential treatment, and alternative therapeutic approaches, FFT is highly successful. In randomized trials FFT was shown to have reduced recidivism for a wide range of anti-social or criminal behavior. In addition, studies have shown it to reduce the cost of treatment.

Youth who are experiencing abuse or neglect at home could also be diverted away from costly out-of-home placements and homelessness through Family Group Conferencing or Family Group Decision Making programs. In these early intervention and prevention programs extended family, kin, and important people in the life of the youth come together to implement a plan for the continued safety, nurturance, and permanency of the youth. These programs show remarkable success in stabilizing youth. Research on Family Group Decision Making found reductions in reabuse, increased family involvement, decreased residential instability, and more extended families accepting care of the youth.

Program models have proven effective at reuniting homeless youth, even those with troubled histories, with their families.

Originally designed to assist young people who have been diagnosed with mental health disabilities and their families, Intensive Case Management (ICM) works with a family (in conjunction with teachers and other helping professionals) to develop an individualized comprehensive service plan. Case Managers who are professional and specially trained conduct an assessment and assist in coordinating supports and services necessary to help children and adolescents live successfully at home and in the community. The case loads are small (1 to 10 or 1 to 12) and offer round-the-clock access. Intensive Case Management services have been used successfully with homeless youth. One study published in the Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders noted that homeless youth receiving Intensive Case Management services showed improved psychological well-being, less aggression, and satisfaction with their quality of life.

Both shelter and outreach services can be used as a gateway to exit homelessness. A 2002 study by Professor Thompson and colleagues compared 261 runaway and homeless youth who received services through emergency shelter and crisis services with 47 at-risk youth receiving services from a long-term day treatment program. The study found that both groups experienced positive changes in their family rela-

tionships, runaway behavior, school behavior, employment, sexual behavior and self esteem. The study noted that there were no significant group differences in the amount of change they experienced, leading one to observe that the less-costly shelter system had as positive return in positive outcomes for youth as the more expensive day treatment programs.

Some youth will never be able to return to their families, and there are successful housing programs that not only meet the housing needs of such youth, but also have programming that addresses their development needs and helps them to build relationships with adults and with the community.

Multiple housing models exist for youth but they have limited capacity in most jurisdictions. Examples of youth housing models include: host homes, shared housing, community-based group homes, dormitories, scattered site transitional housing, single-site transitional housing, permanent scattered site housing with supportive services, and foyer (employment-focused) housing. These models incorporate life skills training, connection to caring adults, and opportunities for growth, mistakes, and positive youth development. Many homeless youth rely on such housing options when family members are unwilling or unable to care for their nurturance and welfare. Most homeless youth never receive housing benefits because of lack of supply and long waiting lists.

Limitations of the research and unanswered questions

There is an extensive body of study and research on the characteristics and demographics of homeless youth, as well as the pathways or antecedent factors leading up to a youth turning to life on the streets. Unfortunately, there are limitations to existing research and we are left with remaining questions.

One problem is that studies that have examined homelessness among adolescents have often cast the problem as individual vulnerability instead of examining the broader environmental factors involved. This has created the tendency by research to focus on the youth behavior in risky situations while homeless, rather than on the adult behaviors that often propel youth from their homes or on interventions and supports that could end youth homelessness. Additional research that focuses on child welfare, juvenile justice, and economic or social network failures that have a role in youth homelessness may allow us to address these causal factors.

Further, little research has been conducted on the inherent characteristics possessed by youth which make them resilient to negative outcomes despite their homelessness. Homeless youth are resilient and creative and often exit homelessness after short periods of time. While it is important to understand the deficits of homeless youth, a greater understanding of their strengths and assets could lead us to new interventions that build upon these strengths to help young people gain residential stability and escape life on the streets.

There is little research that helps clarify the distinction between youth who remain on the streets or hop between shelters and those that remain housed with friends and relatives, either stably or unstably. Further research is needed to understand which program models, resources, or intervention methods best equip "couch surfing" youth with the opportunity to find stable homes and brighter futures.

There are several programmatic models and methodologies which may hold promise in working with youth. However, there is little rigorous research that verifies results. School-based programs that offer youth a safe way to access services or receive one-to-one counseling and support may help prevent and end homelessness, but we have found little evaluation of such programs. We also know that a minority of homeless youth experience chemical or alcohol addiction, yet we do not know whether out-patient support groups or residentially-based treatment geared toward adolescents is more effective. Most of the research on chemical and alcohol addiction is focused on adults. Further, given the high rates of adult sexual exploitation, molestation, and assault of homeless youth, it would be helpful to have a better understanding of the level of support, outreach, case management, and housing stability that are needed to effectively escape prostitution and the commercial sex industry. Another area of youth homelessness that has been under-examined is the experience of undocumented youth who may flee to America to escape abusive, violent, or neglectful families in their home countries. We do not know the dimensions of this problem, or what solutions are workable.

Finally, Congress has funded an array of services, housing and shelter for vulnerable and homeless youth, although not enough to meet all of the need. While we are able to point to some interventions that offer solutions, the vast array of service systems have yet to be rigorously evaluated. It would appear that critical research and study in this area is in its own adolescent phase—able to produce some solutions but not fully matured. When evaluations have been done on local service sys-

tems or specific programs, rigorous experimental designs have generally not been used and often lack comparative data to allow cross-system comparison.

Implications

After a reviewing the current body of research and studies on youth homelessness, the Alliance wishes to offer the following implications, as a framework for this subcommittee in crafting public policy to end youth homelessness:

1. Youth by definition are still developing and require attachment to and the support of caring adults. Homeless youth are unique in that they represent a population of homelessness that is impacted by physical, emotional, and cognitive development. Any consideration, intervention, or program model must consider how positive youth development is both retarded and enhanced through our programmatic responses.

2. Youth homelessness is as much about societal and system failures as individual and family breakdown. The pathways to homelessness for youth are about breakdown of families, abuse and neglect, but also community systems (including economic conditions, social networks, housing stock, and child welfare systems) contributing to youth living on the streets of America.

3. Our targeted response should be tailored toward the length of time spent homeless. Recent runaways and couch surfing youth should be quickly served to find alternative family placements, while shelter and street-dependent youth require intensive case work and access to housing models grounded in life skills training and opportunity for growth, with rapid stabilization in housing as the highest possible priority.

4. We know some of what works and Congress should invest in those interventions that have shown positive outcomes. Those typically tend to be mental health services, intensive case management services, respite care tied to family reunification counseling, and housing coupled with life skills training and positive youth development services.

5. We can end homelessness for youth, and prevent untold suffering, hardship and expense in so doing. With coordination of services between child welfare systems and community-based organizations centering on family, health, and housing this is a social condition that is not inevitable.

Thank you again and we look forward to working with you to confront and end youth homelessness.

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Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you, Mr. Berg.

Mr. Allen?

STATEMENT OF ERNIE ALLEN, PRESIDENT AND CEO, NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Chair, members of the committee, I particularly want to express my gratitude to my friend, Congressman Yarmuth, and to the great leadership of the Congressional Caucus on Missing and Exploited Children, Chairman Lampson and co-chair Congresswoman Biggert.

I want to report to the committee that the progress in the search for America's missing children is extraordinary. More missing children come home safely today in this country than at any time in the nation's history, and that is because the leadership of Congress and the leadership of law enforcement, we have been able to build a national network.

Today, images and information are transmitted instantly across the nation. There are 50 state missing children clearinghouses. Because of the AMBER Alert and the leadership of great nonprofit organizations like the Texas Center for the Missing, we are mobilizing the eyes and ears of the public.

Law enforcement is better prepared. There is more technology, more resources. The good news is, it is working. The bad news, as you all know, is that 2,000 children will be reported by their parents to the police as missing today somewhere in the United States.

And, the bad news is, despite all our progress and despite a recovery rate in the upper 90s, thousands of children each year still don't make it home. Our national center, which is now 23 years old, at your mandate operates a National Missing Children's Hotline.

We are currently handing about 300 calls a day. We have handled 2.2 million over our history. And let me say the long partnership with the runaway and homeless youth community is extraordinarily important, because, for example, we link with the National Runaway Switchboard.

When the kid calls our hotline, we pass them immediately to the National Runaway Switchboard. And when the parent or a member of the public calls the National Runaway Switchboard, they send it to us. It is that kind of cooperation that I think is essential in this issue.

We are focusing aggressively on issues like the long-term missing. There are still thousands of children who have not been identified, many of whom are deceased and whose remains have not been identified, bringing closure for these families.

We are working with the FBI and others to provide direct, on-scene response, technical experts to help law enforcement, who may waste valuable time because they don't know what to do. So there is enormous progress.

An area of perhaps greater challenge is the area of child sexual exploitation. And let me just say a few words about that. This is an issue that has exploded with the advent of the Internet. In 1998, the Congress asked our center to establish what it called the 911 for the Internet, a cyber tip line. Last week, we handled our

500,000th report, and these reports are of online enticement of children, child pornography, child sex tourism, a range of child sexual exploitation offenses.

The good news is that these reports have led to thousands of arrests and successful prosecutions. The bad news is that this problem has proliferated. For example, child pornography has become a multi-billion dollar commercial industry and the victims are getting younger and younger. Our staff has reviewed 8 million images and videos in an attempt to identify the children.

And what we have learned is that of the offenders how have been identified, 39 percent have had images of children younger than 6 years old. Nineteen percent have had images of children younger than 3 years old.

This is an enormous challenge. Law enforcement is doing more today than ever before. The FBI, ICE and other agencies are gearing up the Internet crimes against children task forces around the country are doing extraordinary work, but law enforcement is under-resourced, under-manned and is tackling a problem that is far greater than any of us ever thought.

The last thing I would want to point out is that a couple of years ago, in the PROTECT Act, the Congress asked for us to take on a pilot project to do background screening for youth-serving organizations.

We have done that, and we have found that even though these applicants are being fingerprinted and know they are being subject to national criminal history background checks, fully 3 percent of the applicants have had criminal histories, many of them serious criminal histories involving crimes against children.

Background screening needs to be continued. This needs to be a national effort for youth-serving organizations that is fast, accurate fingerprint based and either free or as close to free as we can get it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[The statement of Mr. Allen follows:]

Prepared Statement of Ernie Allen, President and CEO, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Madame Chairwoman and members of the Subcommittee, as President of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), I welcome the opportunity to appear before you to discuss issues affecting our nation's children. NCMEC joins you in your concern for the safety of the most vulnerable members of our society and thanks you for bringing attention to the problems facing America's families and communities.

Let me first provide you with some background information. NCMEC is a not-for-profit corporation, mandated by Congress and working in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice as the national resource center and clearinghouse on missing and exploited children. NCMEC is a true public-private partnership, funded in part by Congress and in part by the private sector. Our federal funding supports specific operational functions mandated by Congress, including a national 24-hour toll-free hotline; a distribution system for missing-child photos; a system of case management and technical assistance to law enforcement and families; training programs for federal, state and local law enforcement; and programs designed to help stop the sexual exploitation of children.

In recent years, our nation has become outraged by the abductions of children like Jessica Lunsford, Jetseta Gage, Erica Pratt, Shasta Groene, Samantha Runnion, Elizabeth Smart, and many others. Their stories have unleashed fear among parents everywhere who are asking, "How safe is my child?"

The response is, "Safer than ever before."

More missing children are coming home safely today than at any time in our history. Law enforcement is responding more swiftly and effectively. There is a national network in place. Parents are more alert, more aware, and talking to their children about their safety.

Yet that is not enough, and there are some inescapable facts. Hundreds of children still do not make it home each year, and many more continue to be victimized by acts of violence. In fact children are the most victimized segment of our society.[1] Further, research has consistently shown that crimes committed against children of all ages are the most underreported of any victim category.[2]

How has NCMEC responded to this?

We have worked with law enforcement on more than 133,000 missing-child cases, and played a role in reuniting more than 115,000 children with their families. We have a 96.2 % recovery rate, up from 62% in 1990. We have analyzed more than 500,000 reports of crimes against children on the Internet, and referred them to law enforcement, resulting in hundreds of arrests and successful prosecutions.

Here are some of the services we provide:

• Hotline: Since 1984 our 24-hour, national and international toll-free hotline has received more than 2 million calls, or, on average, nearly 300 calls per day, intaking new cases and receiving leads on current cases, which are triaged according to urgency of the information and the case, and referred to the investigating law enforcement agency. Information from callers about runaway children is immediately transmitted to the National Runaway Switchboard.

• Case Management: NCMEC Case Managers serve as the single point of contact for the searching family and provide technical assistance to locate abductors and recover missing children.

• Case Analysis and Support: Using NCMEC databases, external sources, and geographic databases, our analysts track leads, identify patterns among cases, and help coordinate investigations by linking cases together. In 2006 NCMEC created the Attempted Abduction Program to analyze attempted abduction trends and patterns and collect information to assist law enforcement during investigations. Currently, no other national organization aggressively tracks attempted abductions across the United States.

• Forensic Imaging: NCMEC provides age-progressed photographs of missing children and reconstructed facial images of unidentified, deceased children. Since 1990 NCMEC has age-progressed the photographs of almost 3,300 children; these new photos played a role in helping to identify and recover 768 children. Of the 117 facial reconstructions performed by NCMEC forensic artists for law enforcement, 29 children have been identified.

• Cold Case Team: NCMEC works with families, law enforcement, and medical examiners to resolve long-term missing children cases, cases of unidentified human remains of victims believed to be children and young adults, and "cold" child homicide cases. Former homicide detectives review each case, develop a set of recommendations regarding the investigation, and, if requested, provide forensic resources. NCMEC is currently handling 468 cases of long-term missing children, 201 cases of unidentified human remains, and 7 "cold" child homicide cases.

• Photo Distribution: NCMEC is actively distributing photos of missing children via a wide array of resources, including franked envelopes of members of Congress. Three hundred and fifty public and private sector companies and organizations partner with us to distribute photos, at no cost to NCMEC or taxpayers.

• Team Adam: Created in 2003, Team Adam is a rapid, on-site response and support system that provides no-cost investigative and technical assistance to local law enforcement. It consists of 62 retired federal, state and local investigators experienced in crimes-against-children investigations. NCMEC has deployed Team Adam 296 times in 43 states, which has helped to resolve 321 cases of missing children.

• AMBER Alerts: NCMEC offers technical assistance and training, in concert with the U.S. Department of Justice, to all state AMBER Alert programs. We also disseminate AMBER Alert messages to secondary communications distributors, such as cell phone service providers.

• Website: In 1997 we launched our website, www.missingkids.com. The use of the web has enabled us to transmit images and information regarding missing children instantly across America and around the world. The response has been overwhelming. On the first day of operation, our website received 3,000 "hits." Today, we receive more than 1 million "hits" every day, and are linked with hundreds of other sites to provide real-time images of breaking cases of missing children. To demonstrate the value of this in a real-world sense, a police officer in Puerto Rico searched our website, identified a possible match, and then worked with one of our case managers to identify and recover a child who had been abducted as an infant from her home seven years earlier.

• Publications: NCMEC has designed, written, edited and published many collaterals and publications for law enforcement, other child-serving professionals, and the general public. Since 1984, NCMEC has published more than 42 million copies of its publications.

• Training: Each month, in our Jimmy Ryce Law Enforcement Training Center, NCMEC brings in police chiefs and sheriffs for training in the policy and practical aspects of missing and exploited child investigations. In addition, we are also training state and federal prosecutors, police unit commanders, and many others. We also conduct on-site training sessions for hospital staff in preventing infant abductions.

• International Cases: NCMEC plays a key role in international child abduction cases, handling all cases of children abducted out of the United States, as well as acting as the State Department's representative on incoming cases under the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Since September 1995, we have handled 8,264 international child abduction cases, resulting in the resolution of 4,714 cases. We are using the Internet to build a network to distribute images worldwide in partnership with Interpol. We also provide attorney referrals and other assistance to American parents whose children were abducted to another country.

While NCMEC's initial mandate was missing children's issues, NCMEC has also been a leader in the fight against child sexual exploitation. As technology has evolved and provided those who sexually exploit children with more sophisticated and insidious tools to prey on their vulnerability, the challenges of protecting our children have increased in complexity and number. The mission and resources of NCMEC have responded to this challenge in the following ways:

• Exploited Child Division: In 1997, in response to the increasing prevalence of child sexual victimization, NCMEC officially opened our Exploited Child Division (ECD). ECD is responsible for the receipt, processing, initial analysis and referral to law enforcement of information about these crimes. As technology continued to advance and the use of computers became more widespread, Congress recognized the need to provide the public with a central reporting mechanism for crimes against children on the Internet—and came to us.

• CyberTipline: In response to Congress' request, NCMEC launched the CyberTipline, www.cybertipline.com, in 1998. The CyberTipline serves as the national online clearinghouse for investigative leads and tips and is operated in partnership with the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Department of Justice's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section and the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces, as well as state and local law enforcement. Leads are received in seven categories of crimes:

• possession, manufacture and distribution of child pornography;
• online enticement of children for sexual acts;
• child prostitution;
• child-sex tourism;
• child sexual molestation (not in the family);
• unsolicited obscene material sent to a child; and
• misleading domain names.

These leads are reviewed by NCMEC analysts, who visit the reported sites, examine and evaluate the content, use search tools to try to identify perpetrators, and provide all lead information to the appropriate law enforcement agency. The FBI, ICE and Postal Inspection Service have "real time" access to the leads, and all three agencies assign agents and analysts to work directly out of NCMEC and review the reports. The results: in the 9 years since the CyberTipline began operation, NCMEC has received and processed more than 500,000 leads, resulting in hundreds of arrests and successful prosecutions.

• CyberTipline for Internet Service Providers: In 1998, Congress passed the Protection of Children from Sexual Predators Act,[3] which requires that providers of electronic communication services report apparent child pornography on their systems to NCMEC. To facilitate this new role, NCMEC created a separate reporting mechanism through which these providers can swiftly and efficiently transmit the images and related information to NCMEC for analysis and referral to law enforcement. In response to this congressional mandate, NCMEC handles approximately 500 reports per week.

• Child Victim Identification Program (CVIP): CVIP was formally created in 2002 in response to the Supreme Court's decision that federal laws prohibiting child pornography only apply to images of real children and not to images that simply appear to be children.[4] CVIP analysts assist law enforcement and prosecutors by maintain-

ing a catalog of information about identified child victims, which can be used to provide the evidence required to get a conviction in court. The program also serves to assist law enforcement in rescuing children who are currently being abused but whose identity and location are unknown. To date, CVIP has processed more than eight million images and movies, and has cataloged information about more than one thousand child victims who have been identified by law enforcement agencies around the world.

Here is but one example of CVIP's success: our analysts received images of several young girls whom they did not recognize from previous images. The photos were taken in various rooms in a home. By scrutinizing the background in each image, our analysts detected clues to the location of the girls: an ad for a local convenience store, an envelope with the name of a storage facility, and a Girl Scout uniform. A team of federal, state and local law enforcement used this information to find the girls and arrest their abuser. He was the grandfather of two of the girls as well as their legal guardian. He was convicted and given a sentence of 750 years in prison. None of the girls had told anyone about what he had done to them. Their abuse would be continuing today if no one had tried to find them.

• Partnerships with Internet Industry: Last year, six Internet industry leaders, AOL, Yahoo, Google, Microsoft, Earthlink and United Online, created a Technology Coalition to work with NCMEC to develop and deploy technology solutions that disrupt the ability of predators to use the Internet to exploit children or traffic in child pornography. The Technology Coalition brings together the collective experience, knowledge and expertise of its members and represents a significant step towards making the world safer for our children.

• NetSmartz411: This is a first-of-its-kind, online service operated by NCMEC to answer questions about Internet safety, computers and the web. It is provided at no cost to the public, in partnership with the Qwest Foundation. Concerned parents, children, or anyone, can directly access the NetSmartz411 library to search for information as well as contact NCMEC experts to ask questions related to online safety and the Internet.

• Safety Education Campaigns: NCMEC has partnered with federal agencies, industry leaders and public service organizations to create campaigns to educate parents and children about Internet safety. These safety messages include "Help Delete Online Predators," "Don't Believe the Type," "Type Smart. Post Wisely" and "Think Before You Post."

In recent years, Congress has asked NCMEC to undertake a number of new challenges and responsibilities beyond its core functions. We have welcomed them and believe that NCMEC is well suited to take on these tasks. Further, we consider these initiatives to be an integral part of our mandate as the national resource center and clearinghouse on missing and exploited children. These new challenges include the following:

• LOCATER: Congress asked NCMEC to develop and implement a program to enhance basic law enforcement technology in responding to missing child cases. NCMEC created LOCATER, a web-based program which enables police to create high-quality color posters for local distribution when a child disappears as well as disseminate that information online to other law enforcement agencies, the media and other outlets. NCMEC has approximately 4,000 active LOCATER users.

• NetSmartz Internet Safety Resource: When Boys & Girls Clubs of America launched its effort to create technology centers in all of its clubs, Congress asked that NCMEC develop a state-of-the-art Internet safety resource to ensure that these centers could be used safely by children. Thus, NetSmartz was born—an interactive, educational safety resource for children, parents, educators and law enforcement that uses age-appropriate, 3-dimensional activities to teach children how to stay safer on the Internet. NetSmartz is now available at no cost to other youth organizations, schools, and the general public at www.netsmartz.org. Since its inception, 16 state Attorneys General have recommended the use of NetSmartz in their public schools; currently, all 50 states have schools that use NetSmartz.

• Background Checks for Non-Profit Child-Serving Organizations: In response to Congress' request in 2003,[5] NCMEC launched a pilot program to conduct national criminal history background checks on applicants for volunteer positions with non-profit organizations that provide services to children. Because it is a fact that child molesters will seek legitimate access to children, these organizations are particularly attractive to predators. To date, our Background Check Unit (BCU) has conducted over 33,000 fitness determinations based on criminal histories. A startling number of applicants were found to have lied about not having criminal histories, which included violent crimes and crimes against children. This project has demonstrated not only the need for fingerprint-based checks of the national criminal history database, as opposed to name-based checks of state databases, but also the

need to make these comprehensive checks available at the lowest possible cost to ensure that these organizations are able to provide the best protection to the children they serve.

• Hurricanes Katrina and Rita/National Emergency Child Locator Center: The Department of Justice asked NCMEC to lead federal and local efforts to recover the more than 5,000 children displaced during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. Team Adam consultants were deployed to the affected areas to serve as an on-site rapid response and support system, providing investigative and technical assistance to local law enforcement. Team Adam consultants also set up safe areas for missing children in the evacuee shelters and, working directly from these shelters, electronically transmitted information and photos of the children directly to NCMEC headquarters. To manage the volume of Katrina/Rita-related calls, NCMEC created a dedicated Katrina/Rita Missing Person Hotline which we operated in addition to our existing Call Center Hotline. In the aftermath of the hurricanes, NCMEC handled more than 34,000 Katrina/Rita-related calls. NCMEC's relationship with the media proved vital to our efforts—because of the ongoing television coverage of NCMEC's Katrina/Rita Operation, millions of people saw the photos of displaced children and got information that led to their reunification. As a result of NCMEC's expertise and ability to rapidly mobilize critical resources, all (100%) of the more than 5,000 missing/displaced children cases reported to NCMEC in the aftermath of the storms were resolved within 6 months.

In 2006, Congress passed legislation to create the National Emergency Child Locator Center at NCMEC[6] to similarly handle all future such disasters. We have developed a Disaster Response Plan and are actively working with the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the American Red Cross to establish policies and procedures necessary for the Center's operation.

• The Financial Coalition Against Child Pornography: At the request of Senator Richard Shelby, NCMEC brought together leading banks, credit card companies, third party payment companies and Internet service companies, in a joint effort to eradicate the multi-billion-dollar commercial child pornography industry from the Internet.

• Sex Offender Tracking Team: At the request of the U.S. Marshals Service, under its mandate per the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act,[7] NCMEC created the Sex Offender Tracking Team (SOTT) to serve as the central information and analysis hub to help locate non-compliant registered sex offenders. Analysts provide information upon request to federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. In addition, SOTT analysts compare NCMEC's attempted abduction data, online predator data, and child abduction data to identify potential linkages with non-compliant sex offenders being sought by law enforcement. This information will be used to create more effective prevention and response strategies regarding these offenders.

The legacy of missing and exploited children in the United States can be seen in new laws, heightened public awareness, improved response from law enforcement, and unprecedented national attention to prevention and education. The recent resurgence of awareness of this ongoing problem is a call to action to all law- and policymakers across the country. Enormous progress has been made to better protect our nation's children in the past 20 years, but our children deserve even more.

Since 1984, per your mandate and with your support, NCMEC has been proud to serve as America's national resource center and clearinghouse for missing and exploited children.

Madame Chairwoman, we are deeply grateful for the Subcommittee's leadership and support, and, as always, stand ready to work with you and your committee to bring more missing children home and keep every child safe.

ENDNOTES

[1] Children as Victims: 1999 National Report Series. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, May 2000, page 6.

[2] David Finkelhor and Richard Ormrod. Reporting Crimes Against Juveniles. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, November 1999, page 3.

[3] P.L. 105-314.

[4] Ashcroft v. Free Speech Coalition, 535 U.S. 234 (2002).

[5] The Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to end the Exploitation of Children Today (PROTECT) Act, P.L. 108-21.

[6] Defense Appropriations Bill, P.L. 109-295.

[7] P.L. 109-248.

Chairwoman McCARTHY. Thank you, Mr. Allen.

Ms. Alberts?

STATEMENT OF BETH ALBERTS, CEO, TEXAS CENTER FOR THE MISSING

Ms. ALBERTS. Thank you so much for letting me come from the small state of Texas today to talk to you.

During 2006, there were more than 650,000 children reported missing in the United States and more than 60,000 of those are in my home state of Texas. Of these Texas cases, at the end of 2006, 5,182 of those children remained missing. Those are the kinds of things that make me lie awake at night and wonder if we are ever going to get all of those kids back.

I beg you, when you are looking at the issue of missing and homeless children, not to differentiate between them, even if a child left home voluntarily. Any child who is away from home, from a stable, loving environment, is a child at risk.

No child chooses to be marginalized. Children never knowingly choose to expose themselves exploitation and victimization. A child who chooses to run away is always running to a better place, they hope, than the place they have been. They do not consciously choose to become vulnerable to predators and exploiters.

Children who live on the street have three ways to support themselves: They steal from us, our communities; they sell drugs; and they sell themselves. Many resort to all three, creating yet more victims.

It has also been said that children are our most valuable resource, but this is seldom reflected in our practices as a society. With our national focus on terrorism, we worry more about an enemy we cannot see, cannot know and whose motives we cannot understand than those who threaten our children daily.

Make no mistake, the animals who prey on our children are terrorists of the worst order, and they target our most vulnerable citizens, those who represent our future, our children.

Predators systematically and methodically threaten and terrorize our children on all fronts, whether they are runaway or homeless children, those threatened by their own family members or by pornographers who line their pockets with the profits from the sale of innocents.

Our defense must be no less systematic and methodical. The primary motive for stranger abduction is sexual assault of the child, and child molesters have on average 117 victims prior to their first arrest.

Children are no longer safe from these terrorists online, on the streets, in their homes or even in their beds. And what is our response? Very little response, until that particular chicken comes home to roost in our backyard. And then we are outraged and we pick up the mantle and carry on.

But we must act now, before another young life is lost, before another child loses the very innocence that defines childhood.

There is good news. There is hope. There are concerned citizens working together, such as the member organizations of the Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations and the National Center who work tirelessly to ensure that no stone is left

unturned in the battle to protect our children and to punish the guilty.

The AMBER Alert program has been so successful and has accomplished so much. The multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline child abduction response teams now are poised to take this critical notification system one step further by providing for an immediate, full-scale response to a critical missing child incident.

The attorney general's Project Safe Childhood has begun successful efforts to pull together teams to wage war on Internet predators. And as a response to continued threats to our kids, small, independent efforts are popping up across communities daily.

I am very proud of the staff and volunteers of the Texas Center for the Missing for being on the front lines, providing both leadership and training to others in the field for all of these critical programs.

Unhappily, I must report to you that not one of these programs is adequately funded and few, if any, receive a penny of government funding at the local, state or national level. Local grassroots efforts are the most effective method for delivering prevention efforts and saving children's lives.

If only a fraction of our war on terror dollars was devoted to the protection of our children, we could dramatically reduce the number of children traumatized.

Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

I believe that we at the Texas Center for the Missing, through our extensive collaborative partnerships, and through our champions like Congressman Lampson, that we have begun to have a tremendous impact on this problem. But true social change does not happen in isolation. It happens through the concerted efforts of a diverse group of caring, committing citizens focusing on a complex issues and seeing, really seeing, not just the forest, but the trees.

We must ensure the replication of these collaborative networks 10,000-fold are our country and the world to save both our children and ourselves from a future more bleak than we can imagine.

Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Alberts follows:]

Prepared Statement of Beth Alberts, CEO, Texas Center for the Missing

The problem

During 2006 there were 662,228 children reported missing in the United States and 60,729 in my home State of Texas (The National Crime Information Center, 2007). In Texas, 5,182 of those cases remained active at the end of 2006, and I lie awake at night wondering if we will be able to recover all of those missing children.

Any child who is away from a stable and loving home is a child at risk. No child chooses to be marginalized. Children never knowingly make a choice to expose themselves to exploitation and victimization. A child who chooses to run away is always running from a bad place to what they hope is a better place. They do not consciously choose to become vulnerable to predators and exploiters. It has often been said that children are our most valuable resource, but this is not reflected in our practices as a society.

The National Runaway Switchboard reports between 1.6 and 2.8 million youth run away in a year and that youth aged 12 to 17 are at higher risk for homelessness

than adults.[1] Despite these startling statistics, law enforcement training academies are not required to provide any Amber Alert or missing persons investigative tools, training, or resources. Local nonprofit agencies must fill the void.

The solution: Local nonprofit leadership and collaboration

Harris County, Texas, represents Texas Center for the Missing's largest client base. Harris is the largest of the 13 counties in Texas Center for the Missing's primary service area and has a larger population than 24 states in U. S. From 2005 to 2006, the number of children reported missing rose from 11,648 to 14,809 and in Harris County alone, from 8,905 to 11,134—both of these represent more than a 25% increase! Might I repeat, this is a 25% increase in just one year. Despite these alarming numbers, there is no dedicated funding for local prevention efforts or law enforcement investigation and response.

Yes, there is some good news. Strategic partnerships are being formed across the United States and North America. Collaborative efforts like Project Safe Childhood and regional Child Abduction Response Teams are set to have a significant impact through both prevention and recovery of missing children. However, neither of these vital projects is funded. Local organizations are required to tap into their already stretched budgets to provide the people, the time, the resources, and the coordination to make these efforts successful.

Roles of Texas Center for the Missing: A model for local efforts

Texas Center for the Missing offers, or coordinates the delivery of, services to meet the needs of the entire spectrum of missing persons issues. I would encourage other communities to implement a similar comprehensive community child safety plan that should include:

- Programs to educate parents and caregivers in the ways to safeguard children on the streets and on the Internet, and exactly what to do, step-by-step, if a child does go missing;
- Encouraging families to discuss safety issues and to create their own emergency response plan;
- Programs to educate our children in ways to stay safe in our community and on the Internet, and alternatives to running away;
- Fast public notification of a missing child via the Amber Alert for abducted children, or other systems for those missing children who were not abducted;
- Timely, coordinated responses to endangered missing child incidents; and
- Follow-up and aftercare for victims and families.

Texas Center for the Missing's advocacy and support services for victims and their families include guidance in reporting and finding a missing or abducted child, guidance in finding a runaway child, a resource database for abduction survivors and their families, and liaison support between families and law enforcement including case management, reunification, and information and referral services.

Amber Alert

The National Center on Missing and Exploited Children reports that there are 121 Amber Alert programs across the United States credited with recovering 236 children. In the 13-county Houston Region, covering more than 12,000 square miles and a population of more than 5.5 million people, we have issued 65 Amber Alerts representing 70 children. Of these, children in 58 cases were recovered safely, 3 were found deceased, and 4 remain missing. This is an 89% success rate and exemplifies what a powerful tool the Amber Alert can be.

The Amber Alert has made a huge difference in missing child cases; however, it is imperative to understand what the Amber Alert is and what it is not. The Amber Alert is a very effective tool for law enforcement to enlist help in tracking down an abductor, the abductor's vehicle or the missing child. It is a way for the media and the general public to assist in the recovery of an innocent child and a malicious predator.

The Amber Alert is not a panacea. It will never replace a thorough, efficient, and effective law enforcement investigation. It will not replace vigilant supervision of children by trusted adults nor will it replace missing child prevention and education programs. It will not replace adequate prison sentences and good criminal justice supervision of probationers or parolees and, in particular, child sex offenders. Rapists and child molesters are serial offenders. It is well documented within the mental health community that most sex offenders are beyond rehabilitation ("compared

[1] Hammer, H; Finkehor, D. & Sedlak, A. (2002). Runaway/Thrownaway Children: National Estimates and Characteristics. National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway and Thrownaway Children. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

to non-sex offenders released from State prisons, released sex offenders were 4 times more likely to be rearrested for a sex crime."[2]).

Law enforcement officers are the only ones who can issue an Amber Alert for an abducted child. It is a critical element in the resolution of a child abduction, but it is only a part of what we must do to keep children safe. We must each do our part by protecting children and responding when they are in danger. It is my fervent hope that someday soon we will not need the Amber Alert, the Child Abduction Response Team or a National Missing Children's Day because all of our community's children will be safe.

Southeast Texas Child Abduction Response Team (SETCART)

The Southeast Texas Child Abduction Response Team (SETCART) is an effort to bring seasoned investigators, tenured prosecutors, search-and-rescue volunteers and victims' advocates together to work the most urgent child abduction cases. The Southeast Texas Child Abduction Response Team will enable the immediate deployment of all necessary resources for qualifying cases and therefore positively impact these serious, life-threatening scenarios.

Texas Center for the Missing and the Houston Regional Amber Alert are providing leadership for the development and implementation of the Southeast Texas Child Abduction Response Team. Our effort was the first in Texas and serves the region that historically has the most missing child cases in the state. With over 150 law enforcement agencies in the Southeast Texas region, this is a Herculean effort that requires unbiased leadership and strong relationships within the community. Currently, more than 70 law enforcement agencies in our region have signed on to SETCART.

SETCART is a multi-disciplinary, cross-jurisdictional, pre-planned and coordinated response to cases of endangered missing children and child abductions based upon a highly successful model system operating in Florida. While Florida has a state mandate and state funding with which to implement their CART process, Texas is not so fortunate. SETCART is a grassroots-driven effort in which participation is purely voluntary for all of our member agencies.

Missing Persons Response Kit

Texas Center for the Missing has also developed a Missing Persons Response Kit for law enforcement agencies so that they have at their fingertips the tools and contacts to provide the fastest, most effective response in the critical period after a child is missing. Amber Alert and Missing Persons Investigation training is provided upon delivery of each resource kit. Contents of the Resource Kits can be found in Appendix A.

Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance (SETSARA)

One of the greatest achievements of Texas Center for the Missing has been the coordination of the Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance (SETSARA): a coalition of volunteer search-and-rescue groups and law enforcement partners. Prior to the creation of SETSARA, law enforcement had little confidence in the professionalism of search-and-rescue experts and, therefore, did not access this important resource. To compound the issue, there was a mutual feeling of distrust among the individual search-and-rescue groups so that communication was limited and duplication of efforts was common. Now local groups work together to offer effective and efficient search resources to law enforcement and the community.

Formed in 2001, SETSARA provides its membership with search training and public safety agencies (e.g., law enforcement, fire department, and wildlife agencies) with awareness, education, and search services. By providing necessary resources to law enforcement (and only the resources they need and request), we enable law enforcement agencies to focus on what they do best—the investigation.

Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations (AMECO)

AMECO is an organization of member agencies in the United States and Canada who provide services to families with missing and exploited children. Our mission is to build and nurture an association of credible, ethical and effective non-profit organizations that serve this vulnerable population.

In partnership with the National Center on Missing and Exploited Children and the International Center on Missing and Exploited Children, the member organizations of the Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations, of which Texas Center for the Missing is one, serve hundreds of thousands of children and families each year.

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[2] Report on the Recidivism of Sex Offenders Released from Prison in 1994. U.S. Department of Justice-Office of Justice Programs: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

These passionate, professional, caring staff and volunteers work diligently to protect children. Most of us feel it is a mission, a calling, and not just a job. However, we are truly fighting an uphill battle. Two things threaten the work we do: a lack of awareness on the part of the community and legislators about the severity of the problem, and the lack of funding to support these critical life-saving efforts.

Our greatest challenge has been that funding dollars are scarce while demand for our services continues to increase!

Crime-Stoppers

Another collaborative partnership that Texas Center for the Missing has found to be successful is working with the local Crime Stoppers organization. Crime Stoppers of Houston works closely with Texas Center for the Missing and the Houston Amber Alert to maximize the publicity of open Amber Alert cases on the anniversary of the child's abduction. The press conferences convened by Crime Stoppers of Houston provide another tool for law enforcement agencies to secure leads in a cold case.

The Internet Threat

I believe the battle to protect our children has moved, largely, from the street to the Internet. This is not good news. Unfortunately, the Internet has re-defined who is accessible and expanded the victim pool exponentially. A single predator can communicate with hundreds of children and set them up for victimization. Predators share their victims with other predators and manipulate children to self-exploit by sending explicit photos across the internet which are then shared among these heinous criminals.

Locally, Texas Center for the Missing participates in the US Attorney's Southern District Office efforts to implement this vital program. Prevention is key to educate children on the dangers they face online, as well as how to avoid self-exploitation. The very simple concept that, "Digital is forever." is often lost on the most impressionable in our society—young teenagers who are looking for "safe" ways to rebel against their parents and expand their boundaries as young adults. To address this issue, Texas Center for the Missing has developed a cadre of internet safety education programs which are modeled closely upon the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's NetSmartz program. Preventing a child from being abused or exploited is the ultimate goal in all of our educational programs. A complete list of our educational programs can be found in Appendix B.

Project Safe Childhood

Guided by the leadership of the Attorney General, Project Safe Childhood (PSC) aims to combat the proliferation of technology-facilitated sexual exploitation crimes against children. The threat of sexual predators soliciting children for physical sexual contact is well-known and serious; the danger of the production, distribution, and possession of child pornography is equally dramatic and disturbing. The response to these growing problems must be coordinated, comprehensive, and robust. It must aim to investigate and prosecute vigorously as well as protect and assist victimized children. At the same time, it must recognize the need for a broad, community-based effort to protect our children and to guarantee to future generations the opportunity to grow safely into adulthood.

Project Safe Childhood is a definite step in the right direction, pulling together diverse teams working together to keep children safer online, to snare Internet Predators and prosecute them to the fullest. Unfortunately, the predators are cunning, incredibly technologically savvy and highly adaptable to all of the obstacles we place in front of them. We must arm ourselves better against this crime on all levels or we will remain seriously outgunned. As Attorney General Gonzales says, "We can not prosecute our way out of this problem." Sadly, this program, too, is unfunded.

JENNY'S STORY*

In January, 2006, a petite, 15-year-old girl from League City, TX, was lured away over the Internet by a 26-year-old man who lived in her area. He picked her up, took her to his house, drugged and raped her and shared her with two of his friends, one of whom carved Xs with a razor blade from one of her pelvic bones across to the other. 18 months later she and her family are still struggling with their recovery while having to deal with the court, the DA's office and the fact that one of the perpetrators of this heinous

*Jenny's name has been changed to protect her identity.

crime is on the run and may never face justice. This traumatized victim and family strive everyday to get their lives back to normal.

Many civilians as well as law enforcement officers do not feel that internet lures are a danger or on some level believe that a child who leaves of their own volition is not endangered or does not deserve emergency response. Jenny's story exemplifies how a child's single poor choice can lead to a nightmarish experience that becomes a life sentence for and her entire family.

Next steps

The U. S. Attorney General's Project Safe Childhood, Jessica's Law, which has been passed in various states across the country, and the recently passed Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act provide even greater support of programs to arm children and families as well as punish those who would rob our children of their innocence.

We are fortunate to have all of the partnerships and programs discussed in this document, but it will take all of us, working together, to truly protect our children. In the past, we could let our children play in the front yard without standing guard over them. In the past, we could put our children to bed at night and comfortably expect to find them safely there the next morning. Unfortunately, these two simple acts, and many more, can no longer be taken for granted. We have seen children snatched out of their yards and their school and play areas, off the streets in our communities, and from their very homes, that place we all think of as a haven.

RACHEL

Robert Cooke, whose daughter Rachel has been missing since January 2002 says "When I first met the director of Texas EquuSearch, he told me my wife Janet and I are now in a special club. It's a club no one wants to join. It's a club of sorrow and grief. It's the club of parents and families of missing children.

The club is full of emotions. There is anger at the person who took your loved one. The worst feeling of all is helplessness. What can I do? What haven't I done? We've posted flyers and passed out bumper stickers and buttons, but nothing has brought our Rachel home.

Many sleepless nights occur in the club. When you are able to sleep and you awake, you wake up to a reality far worse than any nightmare. The guilt is overwhelming. Why was I not there to protect her? Why didn't I teach her how to protect herself? I am her father; it was my job to protect her. Well, I say it's time to reduce the membership drive for this club".

Funding

Nothing to which I have ever been exposed has affected me as deeply as this issue. I have never been more convinced that working together, caring people can make a difference. I have never been more convinced that we can, we must, do more to protect our children and keep their families from joining "the club."

Unfortunately, most people believe that the missing children problem is solely the province of law enforcement and is already well-funded by our tax dollars. As a result, concerned citizens are unaware of the need to support this effort. The truth is a very different story.

Did you know that there are no designated funds for our Amber Alert system? There are no monies at the local, state or federal level to help offset the costs associated with administering this important effort. Each year in the thirteen-county Houston-Galveston region, populated by more than 5 million people, 12,000—15,000 children are reported missing, and Texas Center for the Missing is responsible for all costs associated with administering the Amber Alert in our high-need region.

Legislation and other public policy issues to pursue

- Comprehensive Funding Tied to Collaborative Efforts
- Establish Statewide Minimum Standards for Certification for Search and Rescue Volunteers
- Give parole officers the right to enter sex offenders residences so law enforcement officers do not have to wait hours for warrants when looking for an abducted child

Conclusion

Regardless of the circumstances under which a child is missing or homeless—abduction, runaway or thrownaway—each of those children, dulled by that trauma, represents a bright future—our future. However, we must devote resources to helping them regain the innocence and sense of hope that will inspire them to become

an active, caring part of the communities in which we live. Otherwise, we have condemned them and ourselves to less—less quality of life, less security, less of a safety-net for those closest to us.

When I was a child, I dreamed of having a child, loving and nurturing a young life. When I realize that dream and had my two daughters, I poured my heart and soul and most of my energy into protecting them and raising them. They were my number one priority, as they should be.

Too often children are not the number one priority of their parents, or of the communities and society in which they are reared. Lip-service is paid to them in grand speeches and editorials, and through poorly funded programs that address piecemeal programs instead of servicing the spectrum of comprehensive needs.

Ultimately, we are judged not on what we say but what we do, and children learn from us too—not from listening to what we say but by watching and emulating what we do, and recognizing where they fall in our priorities. I believed while raising my young children that the world was, at least generally, a safe place. I wonder what young mothers think now.

Unfortunately, adults no longer represent figures of authority to our children, those to whom respect is due. Adults are seen as threats to, or targets of, children. However, we must not blame the child. The child learns by example, by our actions not our proselytizing.

We can blame the media, the celebrities, and law enforcement, but we are the ones who must bear the brunt of the blame—parents, grandparents, citizens of the communities in which our children grow up, decision-makers and policy-makers. We must ask ourselves each day "Am I putting the welfare of our children first?"

We are fortunate in the Houston area to have a comprehensive network of organizations that mobilize and deploy resources to help save children. Most areas don't. However, would it not be better to eliminate the problem of missing children by putting child predators on notice that we won't tolerate them targeting our children, and if they do, we will hunt them down like the animals they are?

Predators like Joseph Smith, who murdered Carlie Brucia in Florida in 2004 and will never be released from prison, will never victimize another child, but those like him are legion. Our best defense against his type are more, and better-funded, programs like the ones AMECO Organizations offer to parents and children in how to reduce the ways for them to become victims.

Each time a child has been abducted—my heart is crushed, and I want to rewind the clock to see what could have been done differently to prevent the tragedy. But all I can do is help when I can and stay steadfast in my convictions that we can reduce these incidences. Working in the missing child field has changed my life forever. I am convinced there is no more challenging or rewarding work, nor has my contribution to any field been more important. Together we can save lives and childhood's innocence.

For the victim and family involved in an abduction or Internet luring case—the victimization is a "life sentence". Their lives are normal the day before the incident, but during and after it there lives will never be the same again.

[Additional materials submitted by Ms. Alberts follow:]

Appendix A.—Law Enforcement Missing Person Resource Kit Inventory List

Pre-Planning

- When It's Not an Amber Alert: Developing a Missing Child Response Plan
- Law Enforcement Policy and Procedures for Reports of Missing and Abducted Children

Amber Alert

- Houston Regional Amber Plan Brochure
- Missing Children, the (Houston) Amber Alert and You
- Website Overview (www.amber-plan.net)
- User Name and Password
- Navigating the Online Web Activation System
- Contact Information
- Houston Regional Amber Plan (includes After Action Report Form)
- Texas Amber Alert Network
- Amber Alert (National) Brochure
- Amber Alert Fact Sheet
- Amber Alert Best Practices Guide for Public Information Officers

- Amber Alert Best Practices Guide for Broadcasters and Other Media Outlets

Local Resources and Investigative Checklists, Alert Systems, and Guides

- Resources for Law Enforcement—Texas Center for the Missing
- Investigative Checklist for First Responders
- Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Missing Person Checklist
- Lost Person Questionnaire
- A Child is Missing Flyer
- Critical Reach Alert System Packet
- FBI's Child Abduction Response Plan: An Investigative Guide
- Missing and Abducted Children: A Law Enforcement Guide to Case Investigation and Program Management
- Recovery and Reunification of Missing Children: A Team Approach

Texas Checklists, NCIC, DNA Tools, and Clearinghouse Services

- Basic Checklist for Working Unidentified Person Cases (Texas)
- NCIC $M Messages
- Information on the Texas Missing Persons DNA Database
- Texas Missing Persons CODIS DNA Database Sample Collection Kit
- Sexual Assault Medical Examinations Reimbursement Form for Law Enforcement Agencies
- Laboratory of Forensic Anthropology and Human Identification: Case Submission Information
- Texas DPS Missing Persons Clearinghouse Brochure
- Texas DPS Special Crimes Service Overview
- Texas DPS Missing Persons Clearinghouse State and Federal Missing Persons Statutes

National Resources

- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) Resources for Law Enforcement Professionals
- NCMEC Nationwide Support Services
- Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations (AMECO) Membership List
- National Association of Search and Rescue (www.nasar.org)
- Safe Return: Alzheimer's Disease Guide for Law Enforcement
- Resources/Websites of U.S. Departments
- NCMEC General Information and Publications
- National Training Available

Family Resource Packet

- When Your Child is Missing: A Family Survival Guide
- Texas Crime Victims' Compensation Application Form (English)
- Texas Crime Victims' Compensation Application Form (Spanish)
- Victim Support Resource Database (Greater Houston Area)
- A Family Resource Guide on International Parental Kidnapping
- Alzheimer's Association Brochure
- SafeReturn—Wandering: Who's at Risk?
- Covenant House-Texas Flyer

Discs and Software

- Simple Leads Management System
- Federal Resources on Missing and Exploited Children: A Directory for Law Enforcement and Other Public and Private Agencies

Texas Center for the Missing Programs

S.A.F.E. Child Puppet Show is for children under 10 years old and features Detective Buddy who teaches Billy and his friend, Barb, how to stay safe with real-life examples.

Missing Child Prevention Training for Caring Adults is specifically designed to teach parents, childcare providers, concerned community leaders, and educators how to keep children safe from abduction and internet lures.

Internet Safety Training consists of multi-media presentations developed in three formats geared toward: (1) parents/adult caregivers, (2) 6th-12th graders, and (3) elementary-aged children.

Alzheimer's Wandering Prevention Training is for caregivers whose loved ones suffer from any form of dementia to deter the highly dangerous pattern of wandering.

Casework/Case Management includes: general safety information, child ID kits, Crime Victims' Compensation Advocacy, search-and-rescue resources, and law enforcement liaison services.

Houston Amber Alert is administered by Texas Center for the Missing. We train law enforcement on the local Amber Alert system, provide 24-hour support for alert issuance, and deploy trained search-and-rescue experts upon request.

Southeast Texas Search and Rescue Alliance is a consortium of search-and-rescue experts. Texas Center for the Missing coordinates the training and deployment of these vetted search-and-rescue volunteers through an alliance of member organizations dedicated to finding the missing.

TEXAS CENTER FOR THE MISSING

713.314.3673 • Fax: 713.522.7386
www.thetexascenter.org

We offer help, and hope, to the missing and their families.

Programs *(cont.)*

Southeast Texas Child Abduction Response Team is a multi-discipline, cross-jurisdictional, coordinated response to endangered missing children and child abductions based upon a highly successful model in Florida. By coordinating the resources that already exist in our 13-county region, we can bring all relevant assets of the 150+ law enforcement agencies and myriad social services together to find an at-risk child, apprehend predators, and reduce the number of children affected in the future.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much does each presentation cost?
All programs are provided to the community at no charge. However, a suggested donation of $50 per presentation is greatly appreciated.

How long does each presentation last? The S.A.F.E. Child Puppet Show lasts approximately 20 minutes, and requires 30 minutes to set-up. All other presentations are typically one hour, but can be shortened or expanded depending on your organization's needs.

How many people can each presentation serve?
Texas Center for the Missing is only limited by the size of your meeting space and the audiovisual equipment capabilities at your location.

What are the reservation procedures?
Contact us at 713.314.3673 or support@tcftm.org to schedule your presentation.

Are programs available in Spanish?
Some materials are available in Spanish. Currently, we require a volunteer translator from the requesting organization to interpret the presentations.

How do I request child identification kits?
Child identification kits are distributed at all educational events. In addition, you can contact us directly (713.314.3673 or support@tcftm.org) to receive this critical resource for recovering children quickly and safely.

Chairwoman McCarthy. Thank you very much.

There are many of us that sit on the Education Committee that feel very strongly—before I came here, I was a nurse, so I kind of look at things holistically. And many of us are looking at those young families from when the child is born to be able to reach out and give help to them at that particular time, hopefully so that we won't be running into problems later on, working with the parents and certainly working with the newborn child.

But, with that, Rusty and Mr. Rolle, I guess I would want to hear from you. You have been through the justice system, you have been through foster homes, you have been through homeless shelters.

Where do you feel could be an improvement as far as where did the system drop both of you? Where did we lose you, as a society? What could have been done, or what do you think could have been done? Because I am sure you probably thought about that, if some-

body had gotten to you at an earlier age to work with you, or did you have to go through it, just grow out of it, or with the help that you got?

Could you put your mike on?

Mr. ROLLE. Today, I had a conversation with Vicki. She runs the Network for Youth. And I didn't know of half of the services that were in New York City. And I didn't know how to get to the place that would have told me where the services was.

I kind of just stumbled on people in the community just trying—when I got kicked out of my mother's house, I was walking down the street and a friend of mine who was in the theater group said, you can stay at my house. I had this big bag of stuff in my hand, and he said, what happened? I told him what happened. But that was only because I was a part of that group.

And this was out of our own pocket. We met at the local school, so it was just her ingenuity, trying to figure out how to do something, because she just had a heart. Even myself, with the work that I do. So a lot of it is, I guess, public awareness, or in entertainment we say marketing, to be known.

I don't know, sitting on the subway, I can see a place, see signs or see something that is attractive to a young person that he can say, all right, if need something, I could call this number. And I never knew of any places like that. So I think that was missing.

And then for me, personally, I think where I got lost a little bit was the arts in the school for me, being in school—not so much the arts, but a place to kind of just talk, if that makes sense. When I heard him speak, it touched me, because I feel like that is why I couldn't pay attention in school, or I acted out, was because I didn't have a place that I could talk about those things.

Who wants to hear about some kid, what he is dealing with? So that is where I kind of got lost.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you.

Rusty?

Mr. BOOKER. I guess I could say, going through everything I went through, I guess I can say I always felt like I could go to Safe Place to get what I needed done.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. How did you find out about the Safe Place, just to go to them?

Mr. BOOKER. When I was 12, my previous foster mother told me about it and she told me to go to the library and ask for it. And it took me a couple of hours. I sat there thinking, because I was kind of scared about what was going to happen afterwards, after I got there.

But I finally got the courage to walk up there and ask for it. And, like I said, when I got there, I talked to somebody and within 2 weeks I was with that previous foster mother that had told me about it.

And I don't feel like the state really did anything after I left there to find me somewhere to go. They just stuck me back in an abusive home. And there, I just went downhill. I once again was in that home and it wasn't doing anything for me.

I had nobody to talk to, was roaming the streets, selling drugs, doing drugs, just doing whatever I pleased. And nobody was ever there for me.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. And I guess just a follow-up question, for the rest of the panel, especially with what kind of background checks are we doing for the foster homes that these kids are going into?

And what are we doing as far as when you talked about the first thing I was talking about—obviously, we should be fingerprinting those that are working with children. We should be doing the same thing with the elderly, in nursing homes.

I happen to think we should be going both ways, because there is a lot of abuse in nursing homes, also. But I will go back with what is the answer? When these kids go into foster homes and they turn out to be bad homes and these kids have no place to go?

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Chair, clearly, there are an extraordinary number of committed, dedicated people doing great work. I mean, what we hear around the country is there just aren't enough. And there are inadequate resources to support these alternative programs and been the basic social services programs.

And state and local governments are just overwhelmed with the sheer magnitude of the problem. And I think this is a very complex answer, and it is one that involves more resources and also involves—you talk about background screening.

We have dealt with these cases all the time that make it to us and we just have to build systems where the protection of the child is paramount in all of this. And I think there are ways to do that, but it is complicated.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. I will finish up with this. I know back in New York many years ago, actually, my neighbor took in foster children for a long time. One of the problems that she came across was back then every 2 years, even though the children were with her, happy, they had to be moved out so there would be no attachment. Thank goodness we have outgrown that, hopefully to a large extent.

With that, Mr. Platts?

Mr. PLATTS. Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thanks again to all of our witnesses and, Rusty and Mr. Rolle, or Kazi, if you prefer, especially the two of you, being willing to come and share your personal experiences and stories. It certainly helps us better understand the real-life aspect of these issues.

And I commend your courage in doing so and through your efforts of ensuring that your challenges result in positive outcomes for others. And that through your efforts here today and not just today in testifying, but in your work, in your community, in your efforts, that you are going to make a difference for others. And so I especially thank you.

And I would like to recognize, and I don't know if he is comfortable, and I don't know who he is, so if he is not, but if Mr. Bill, as referenced here, if you would like to stand and be recognized on behalf of all of those who work with children. [Applause.]

We appreciate your helping Rusty to be here and, as I say, in kind of being recognized on behalf of all of our men and women throughout the country who are working on behalf of youth to improve and ensure the safety of their lives, so thank you.

Mr. Allen, I want to follow up, and you talked about it in your written testimony and in your oral testimony, about the background checks, this effort to try to ensure that predators don't get access through a legitimate program. Did you say 3 percent on average?

Mr. ALLEN. We have done in the pilot that was set up under the PROTECT Act, the FBI runs the records, and then we do fitness determinations so that we communicate to the youth organization on a red-light, yellow-light, green-light basis.

We have reviewed 25,000 applicants, and of that number, roughly 7 percent had criminal records and slightly less than 3 percent had what we considered disqualifying criminal records. This is in every case knowing that they are being fingerprinted and knowing that they are going to be subjected to a national FBI-based criminal history background check.

Mr. PLATTS. Given that that is 3 percent of that 25,000, so we are talking a significant number, that are seeking access to children that shouldn't be, what happens once you make the identification?

I guess, does law enforcing in any way follow up on that information? Are those who obviously present information either falsely, that they have no reason—I imagine some of those 3 percent in their adjudication probably are prohibited from having contact with children.

Is there any specific follow-up mechanism to ensure that not just they are prevented from being in that program, because the worry is they will go to another program and not get caught?

Mr. ALLEN. Yes. Now, I think the key point in all of this is in many of these instances, these offenders have not done something wrong by applying to be a volunteer, absent some kind of violation of their parole condition or probation condition, but where possible, where actionable, we are making sure that the appropriate law enforcement agency gets that information.

Mr. PLATTS. Because by them having it, there may be something in their parole that says no contact and the fact that they actively sought would then be evidence that they are violating that parole.

Mr. ALLEN. Yes.

Mr. PLATTS. Okay, related to that, and, Ms. Alberts, I think it was in your testimony you talked about access to parolees and parole officers being given more access on a timely manner where there is belief that perhaps a child has been abducted or sexually abused by someone on parole.

Ms. ALBERTS. Absolutely. There are several cases. If you will recall, the Jessica Lunsford case, that was a case right there where she was in that parolee's residence, that had they not had to wait for a warrant, something could have been hopefully avoided at that time.

We just felt that, in working with our law enforcement agencies, that the probation and parole officers have rights of access to the domicile for welfare checks or those kinds of things. And why not in a case, during those critical first hours that a child is missing, if we can close in and close that gap, I think that would be phenomenal.

Mr. PLATTS. I assume that most of that is probably going to be driven by state law in most prosecutions.

Ms. ALBERTS. Right, right.

Mr. PLATTS. Although there are federal prosecutions as well. And I guess I was under the belief that someone on parole basically gave up their right to privacy while they are on parole. But your understanding is that if they go in for other reasons, but they still have to——

Ms. ALBERTS. My understanding is that in order to come in in a circumstance like this, it still has to meet the probable cause in order to justify a warrant. That is my understanding. I am not an attorney, but that is what my law enforcement folks are telling me.

Mr. PLATTS. I see my time has expired. I am not sure if we will have a chance to come back with a second round. If not, again, I want to thank each of you.

Is it okay if Ms. Eggleston had a follow-up I think?

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Oh, sure.

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. Many of the RHY providers are licensed by the state. So in Arizona, and I speak about my own state, every staff member that works, or volunteer that works in our programs have to be fingerprinted and have to go through a background check.

Yes, we do get those few that knowingly apply for positions. The challenge we have is the time line to get that information back. It is a drudgerous process. So even a good person coming to volunteer that has no background until they are cleared, we can't let them work with our young people.

So the challenge we have is the time line. It can take 3 to 6 months and it costs, $60, $80 a pop to have it done. So, for us, most of us are licensed. Most of us that provide the services within the RHY umbrella meet those criteria, but it is a time line issue more than anything else.

Mr. PLATTS. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. You are welcome.

Mr. Grijalva?

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And, as my colleague Mr. Platts mentioned, let me thank Mr. Booker and Mr. Rolle. Your persistence and your strength is something that I respect and admire very much. Thank you for your testimony.

Ms. Krahe-Eggleston, a couple of questions. Do you have any data, or even an idea, of the percentage of homeless young people in the centers that you have that have aged out of foster care?

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. Congressman, I could tell you an approximate, but I could gather that information for you specifically and get that to you in writing. We see a lot of street kids that have aged out of the system, by choice sometimes. They don't want to be involved with the system. They have been involved with the system that has been very difficult for them for a long time.

The foster care system isn't always a friendly system, to say the least. So most of them would rather not be involved with the system, and as soon as they turn 18, they disappear.

But the Chafee funds that came in a few years ago picked up a lot of those kids. But I can get you that information.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you.

Your agency operates a residential program for homeless young families. Tell the committee a little bit about that and about what I perceive to be an increasing need for that kind of residential service.

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. The young families that we see, whether they are single-parent families or intact young families, just trying to get by in today's time, it is very, very difficult. The housing costs, just the day-to-day living costs, become insurmountable. In the service delivery system we have, we have young couples.

We have couples that are under the age of 21 or 24 sometimes, but mostly under the age of 21, that choose to have children and they are a couple. And some are married, some are not. But they are a couple.

Being able to serve them is a huge gift to our community, and it is one that the need for that kind of service has become more and more apparent as time has gone by. I think we see that across the country with that.

Of course, single moms, single dads, raising kids at age 19 years old is a huge challenge today. We see it.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you.

And one other question, if I may. Some examples of how your agency provides positive youth development principles to the young people that you work with. I think this legislation, this authorization, is also about youth development. It is not just a safe harbor. There are things that need to occur as part of that safe harbor.

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. For me, the biggest issue around positive youth development is having the kids involved with every step of their process within the system. People can't decide what is going to happen to a 16-year-old by themselves. That 16-year-old or 15-year-old or 18-year-old needs to have a voice in what happens to them, for them, with them.

Also, getting the kids involved at all levels of our organization is really important, and most of us within the RHY community, kids are on our boards. Young people serve on our advisory committees. They have a say in how the program operates and what services they need.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much.

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. You are welcome.

Mr. GRIJALVA. A final question. Mr. Berg, you mentioned in your oral testimony, I don't know how to describe it, but you become desensitized, tolerate, benign acceptance of the idea or the concept of homelessness, and, in this specific instance, homeless youth.

We talked about outreach. We talked about getting information to those persons that need it. But how do we combat that attitude? I sense it as well. There is a margin of tolerance—"Oh, they are homeless"—and you kind of walk away from it.

Mr. BERG. Yes, thank you, Mr. Grijalva. I agree. I think hearings like this are helpful. The more community-based kind of hearings, I think the more people can hear from, particularly in the issue of youth homelessness, from young people themselves who have gone through these things.

I think that is very effective. I know I constantly talk to members of Congress and their staff who us sort of wonky, D.C. types can talk until we are blue in the face, but what they remember is talking to a person who had been homeless and suddenly realizing that this just wasn't some number on a page.

We struggle with that all the time. The other part is we need policies that are directed at immediate solutions, short-term solutions, getting people off the streets and into some sort of stable housing, fast. And we need to have performance measures for providers that include those.

I know the National Network for Youth has been in favor of that. Those are some of the things that will be helpful.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. You are welcome.

Mrs. Biggert?

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

One of the first situations I think that caused me to get so interested in these types of programs was having a neighbor who had a daughter that was troubled and was a runaway. And they never found her, never heard from her. My neighbor died not too long ago, and I think that was the thing that was so troubling to her, was never to know what had happened to her child.

And for all of the good work that all of you do on this, I noticed that, Mr. Allen, you have a cold case where you are still working on finding those missing children that have been gone for a long time.

Mr. ALLEN. Congresswoman, the media spotlight dims and the world forgets, but these families don't forget. And so we have a team that is actively looking at these long-term cases, trying to look for new leads. We have resolved, having worked more than 5,000 of these cases, resolved about, as I recall, 368.

All but 12 of them were resolved through identifying a deceased child. And while that doesn't bring a live child home, at least it brings closure. But I think it is important.

These are long, long-term cases. And in 12 of the cases, where law enforcement had run out of leads, the child was found alive and was brought home. So it is really important that we not forget about these kids that are out there.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you, and thanks for all you do on that.

And then, Mr. Berg, how do you reach runaways? Or any of you that are in these services, and I know so many times that they are ready to come home if they can find a way home or a pathway to connect with their families again. How do you encourage that? How do they get to know about the services?

Mr. BERG. Yes, I think one of the things is the runaway and homeless youth programs of course include a very active street outreach program that I think is very effective and reaches lots and lots of people and are very effective where there is a family ready to take a child back.

I would note parenthetically that there are many situations where that is not the case, where the outreach is a good first step, but there is nothing behind it. And that is why more of the kinds of programs, transitional programs and permanent housing options, are very necessary.

But I think people in the field have really developed this sort of art and science of outreach to a very great extent. There are a lot of very skilled practitioners who carry this out.

Partly, it is knowing that there are options available and just making sure that people know what those are. I mean, the story about sort of not having a place to find about what sort of services are available I think is sort of a common one.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Well, one of the bill that I am working on is to provide for homeless children who are emancipated and are not working with their parents, or there is no connection. And right now, they cannot get scholarships to college because the parents can't or won't sign the form and they won't disclose their finances, which of course they wouldn't be using for their child's education, anyway.

Do you have any idea how many youth could take advantage of something like this?

Mr. ROLLE. I had a couple of things, but just on that particular point, the state of California, they did something very similar where they wanted to talk about foster care, because it is very, very high there. And one of the things that I found when I emancipated is I didn't know where to go to go to the next level.

And I think that I am creating a network for the people in positions like yourself to look down at all of these people doing this work and connect them, because sometimes we don't know about each other.

And if there is a network of I don't have them, you have them, and we both kind of converse about what are the things that we can help each other on, I think that is very important. And a lot of times everybody is fighting for the money. There is not enough money. So if there is enough money, then we are, like, we can work more together.

So I think that is very important, especially for emancipated youth, because they are the ones who feel the jails, fill the cemetery, the strip clubs, because those girls, a lot of them go to college. They are the ones that are in the clubs, trying to go to college, really, trying to find a way. And the innovation is not there, and I think that was wonderful, what Ms. Eggleston said about having the young people involved.

Because young people, that is who evolved us as human beings. They are the ones that think innovatively and come with new ideas. And one of the feelings for most young people is that we don't matter.

I think she said an excellent point about terrorism. We know that that matters in America, but we don't feel as young people that we matter, by the way the funding goes, that there is not a feeling or a marketing from the government to say that young people matter and we don't want them homeless, we don't want them running away from home.

That feeling is not there, so I think innovation and having more strong voices of young people to say something about it.

Mr. BERG. If I could just add on that particular piece of legislation. I hope everyone, other members of the committee, are aware of this particular piece of legislation.

I can't tell you the numbers, but it is maybe not like the worst-off kids, but the idea that young people who have been abandoned by their parents can't go to college because there is nobody to sign the financial aid forms, I find that personally offensive. And I am glad it has been dealt with.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I hope all the members know, because if they sign up as co-sponsors, we can get it through much faster. So, thank you.

I yield back. Thank you.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you.

Mr. Yarmuth?

Mr. YARMUTH. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And to all the professionals on the panel, thank you very much for being here. Thanks for all you do to help with this serious national problem.

Kazi, thank you for your story and for all you do.

Rusty, you did a great job and your community is very proud of you, and I am very proud to be your Congressman, so thank you for everything you have done today.

And Mr. Platts beat me to introducing Bill, but I will say that this morning, I was talking to Bill, and he mentioned the fact that when he was younger and people were deciding what to do, that all of his friends were becoming lawyers and politicians. I don't know who all those people were. But the implication may be that he hadn't chosen the right path, but I know he knows he did. And I know today Rusty is grateful that he did, and so are we.

Kazi mentioned something that leads me to a topic that came up in our forum that we held a few weeks ago. And that was the fact that even in a community like Louisville, which has national Safe Place headquarters and a wide array of services that are available to homeless and runaway youth, that there is no continuum of contact with the young people who are disconnected.

And they go from one service, where they do get some help or attention, and then they are back into the community and disconnected once again and they go through a series of these encounters with services. But nobody is there to kind of help them through the entire process.

Any of the professionals who would like to comment on that, and with specific reference to whether they know of any models for providing some kind of continuum.

Ms. ALBERTS. I like to think we are, and I think that what you have heard today in talking about the partnerships and collaborations, I think that is the key. You will notice in my written testimony, one of the things I said was to tie funding to collaborative efforts so that people don't feel like it is okay to operate in isolation when they hit a particular point on a spectrum of services.

There needs to be a requirement that you know what came before for the child and what needs to come after, because children fall through the cracks. They get a little bit of this and they get a little bit of that. And they try to make a patchwork quilt out of it, and there are huge, gaping gaps in those services.

This is a pet peeve of mine. I have been in nonprofit management for 27 years, and the reason we have the program that we have at the Texas Center for the Missing is that I recognize the

need to make sure that if we are not doing it, somebody is doing it, all along, from the beginning to the end of those programs, because it is the only true way to make a difference. It is the only way to save those kids who need help.

And communication, collaboration, partnerships, whatever it takes. And no territoriality. There is no my piece of the pie needs to be bigger than your piece of the pie.

I don't know who the author of the quote is. It is unknown, but it says it is amazing what you can get accomplished when nobody cares who gets the credit.

Mr. YARMUTH. Did you want to respond, Ms. Krahe-Eggleston?

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. I would really like to.

Mr. YARMUTH. Sure.

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. I have the honor of working in a community that works very hard at collaboration for the young people that we serve. We have a small group of providers of the types of services that I referred to today. There is four or five of us in town, and we meet every week or every other week, at least, and talk about the cases that we have.

The money only goes so far, so we try not to duplicate services. We really have those conversations across the board that our case managers have.

Good case management, to me, is the key, building that relationship with the young person and being able to maintain that. Funding that we get our service that we get that are narrow based, where there is a finite beginning and end, it doesn't do our young people any good.

What does the best for your young people is a continued involvement over the long haul. It is the relationship Rusty talked about with his workers. It is the relationship that the young people we are involved with—in our young moms program, we have been involved with moms for the last 6 years and we know, and they stay with us a couple years, we know where 97 percent of those young women are today and keep in touch with them regularly.

That is the key to success.

Mr. YARMUTH. I would like to also maybe add another element to this discussion, and that is the connection between the juvenile justice system and the social services that are available for the homeless, because obviously many of the kids who are homeless and runaways end up in an encounter with the juvenile justice system.

Is this something that your experiences has shown that works or is there sometimes too great a disconnect between the judicial system and the social service aspect?

Mr. ALLEN. Just a brief comment, and I think these folks know better than I, but when I got into this, when we got into it, in the 1970s, the whole premise was you would have the law enforcement system over here that is viewing these kids in one way. You have the social services system over here that is viewing these kids in another way. And the kids get caught in the cracks.

And so our whole beginning in this effort in Louisville 30 years ago was to create a police-social work team, to kind of blur the traditional lines and the traditional turf battles between jurisdictions,

between units of government and, frankly, I think there are models all over the country where that is working and working very well.

And when you put people together, they can share information, even though their mindset and their approaches are different.

Mr. ROLLE. I had just something real brief on that. I think that one of the key things is the innovation. And the reason why I say innovation, there is a song by a guy named Justin Timberlake. He had a song called I am bringing sexy back. But if you translate that into the work that we are doing, it is old ideas in a new time.

Even the funding that is for stuff like this is, to my understanding, the same amount that it has been many, many years ago, and the economy is just different. So even finding the people working in social services, and I know a lot of them, they are burnt out.

Their bosses don't even care, because their salaries don't really—so that feeling that you get burnt out doing this work. People need things. They need you to be excited about coming to work and that is why they fall through the cracks in the juvenile justice system.

For people doing this youth work, there needs to be innovation in how we deal with them. We need to make the job, for lack of better words, in the way that I know how to translate it, is sexy. People need to feel like I want to be involved with the youth and giving back. So that is one thing.

And another thing, something that you asked earlier, I think, when we fall through the cracks is in the foster home, when you go back there, there is not—I think that instead of just placing them in a home, the whole house should now go under some type of training.

In New York City, there is a place called Harlem Children's Zone, and that is a great model for a lot of things that he is talking about. But, the Harlem Children's Zone, they provide training from birth, when the baby is still in the womb, for certain families, so that those families can have that training.

And it is sexy to go there and the whole environment. The funding is there, the whole environment says that, all right, our youth matter. So I would just say innovation is the key word.

Mr. YARMUTH. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. You are quite welcome. When you were talking about burnt out, I am thinking of my nurses, all over the country. We are trying to work on that, too.

Mr. Sarbanes?

Mr. SARBANES. Thank you, Madam Chair, for holding the hearing.

I wanted first to salute Representative Biggert for her work on these issues. In particular, we have been working recently on the McKinney-Vento funning, which is critical in a whole host of areas in terms of keeping families together and combating homelessness among young people. And Representative Lampson, who has obviously been right on the forefront of dealing with issues of missing children.

Can you quantify the extent to which the issue is about communication and coordination and collaboration for purposes of finding kids who have fallen through the cracks, versus real services that have to be provided through affirmative outreach?

Because what I gather from the discussion is there is a certain amount of this which is just making sure that we are in touch with each other better, so that when kids disappear or run away, or are lost or missing, there is a communication infrastructure in place that allows you to find them and get them back home.

But there is another dimension, which is reaching out to kids on a continuous basis and having resources behind that so that you can not just get them reconnected, but support that so that they don't fall into the cracks again. And I don't know if you can quantify how that splits out.

You will probably say that they are too interrelated to separate, but I don't know if anybody wants to comment on that.

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. I think for education purposes, the thing that helps the most is people just knowing what is going on. The schools are a great place to connect with young people. If they know there is a safe place out there within their school structure and the school is aware of what is going on in the communities, they are a huge help.

We have found that over and over and over again. Youngsters as young as 8, 9, 10 years old, know that there is a principal or a teacher or somebody that has the information about a service, whether it be in regards to homelessness or a multitude of services.

But the school system, I have found, is probably one of the best ways to get the information out so that teachers know that there are services out there, so that those other significant people in the little ones' lives start young enough that notice things going on with a child and his family. And teachers are great at that.

Sometimes, they don't know the resources that are out there. So, in my book, it is really important that the education process is a community-wide process about the services that are out there and what needs to happen, but, as well, it is our responsibility to get that information out.

We spend a lot of time in the schools, mostly middle schools and high schools, but we get information out to all the counselors on a regular basis, and I think that is part of that prevention and early intervention piece that may avoid those children hitting the streets at age 16 or 14.

Mr. SARBANES. The other question I had is that in the larger committee, Education and Labor Committee, we have had numbers of hearings over the last few months on the issue of economic insecurity in the country. And I would imagine that you all can sense the interplay between this predatory culture on the one side and the economic insecurity of any families on the other.

And as economic insecurity is heightened in the society, it leads to increased pressures on families. It helps break down families in ways that then makes them much more vulnerable to the predatory side of our society. And if you could comment on that, if you are seeing the trends of that sort of interplay between this culture and economic insecurity.

Mr. ROLLE. I experienced that. It wasn't in this country, but coming from a poor country, the reason why I was in that abusive situation was really based on that. The lady that my mother left me with, my mother got stuck in America and she couldn't leave.

So the lady that I lived with, I was there too long and I became another expense. And the stress of that, and then her husband leaving, was the reason why I became the stress release. When the resources are there for people—she was a stepparent—so when the resources are there for people like her. And it goes even deeper, because the reason there are not resources for people like her is because the agencies that do the work feel as if they don't have enough resources and then it trickles down.

Even the brother here, he said when his father left and his mother was dealing with it, she had to go through her healing, she needed to know that there were resources and a place for her, because of what she was dealing with trickled down to him, and it goes on.

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. Many, many of our young people are homeless due to economic issues, whether it means a parent became incarcerated and all of a sudden there is no more money at home, or that mom had another baby and you are 16, you are 17, just go fend for yourself.

The economic issues are huge, and we have many, many young people that live 10 to an apartment, just to try and get by. And they are okay, they are doing their best to get by.

A lot of our young moms come to us with a garbage bag of clothes and that is it, and a baby on their hip, and have no place to go. Think about affording just diapers today. Just think, if you have been to the grocery store lately and bought a box of diapers, think about living on minimum wage, having to pay a portion of childcare if you don't qualify and having to pay for food, housing. Just the day-to-day living is almost impossible. And it is very hopeless for many of them.

Mr. SARBANES. Thanks for your testimony.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Mr. Lampson?

Mr. LAMPSON. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Wow, what magnificent stories. It is hard to know where to start and I wish I were a member of your committee. It would be fun to work with on one hand. On the other hand, you would probably reach a little bit of a level of frustration because there probably are more questions than there are answers to give.

But as I was listening to everybody's stories, the things that I thought of were some luck involved on the part of finding the right people, just happening across the right thing that Mr. Booker came across the Safe Place. And I want to ask you a question about Safe Place in just a minute.

I keep writing down, time and time again, commitment. I write down the word "money." Our children are an investment. We are choosing, it seems like, to postpone that investment, and instead of trying to make the resources available now, as difficult as it is, we are choosing to not do it and then we are choosing to pay for people to stay in prison or hospitals or to support the criminal activity that they are getting away with.

For me, right now, it is hard to find the answers to the questions in listening to what you all are doing. I found, when I visited a Boys and Girls Club—I happened to have been in Galveston, Texas, about 2 years or so ago, when a truant officer brought a 12-year-

old little girl in, and I got to sit in on the interview there with her and found out what difficulties that she was facing.

She didn't have anyone to listen to her about her problems with education. She thought all the teachers hated her, didn't like her, weren't willing to help her. She thought she was dumb, stupid, couldn't pass classes. She was making F's in every subject.

And through the course of the conversation with her, we found out that she did have some interests. She was interested in astronomy and, interestingly enough, she actually picked up a book on calculus to, she said, try to help herself understand some of that. And here is a 12-year-old reading a calculus book, and I don't even know what calculus is. Knowing then that students, kids, have great opportunities if we would but see it in them.

And I want you to talk some more, Ms. Eggleston, if you don't mind. You talked abut this catch-22 of getting kids caught in a situation where they have to maintain employment in order to stay afloat financially. Employment prevents them from being able to go into school and taking opportunities, whether it is secondary or post-secondary, any of them.

What can policymakers do to help right this lack of—what are the specific things that you would tell us to try to put into words, policy?

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. One of the first things I would do is talk about true age, of being able to be independent. I don't know how many of you are parents, but I know my children, when they were 18, weren't able to support themselves.

We forget that these children are our children as well, and that magic age of 18 across our country is a falsehood, as far as I am concerned. So, for me, taking a policy look at what is the age of majority, because that dictates a lot of things in our world.

Again, I think about my own family, and these are no different. To me, that is really important. The other issue is being able to afford to do all those things that the affordability is impossible. Finding jobs that pay well isn't easy. A living wage is not $8 an hour. I don't know any community where you can live on $8 an hour, to be honest, if you are a single mom trying to raise a child.

A lot of our issues around unaccompanied and disconnected young people, these are people that don't have support systems. These are people that don't have you or me or an aunt or uncle. We find that we play that role for so, so many.

We supplement rents all the time for young people. We help pay utilities. We try and take care of the young people that are lucky enough to touch the service delivery system. There are a lot that don't. There are a lot that don't.

So how do we expand that safety network? I mean, that is a resource issue. A lot of us raise a lot of money in our own communities to supplement what we get from what comes from our federal friends.

Mr. LAMPSON. Well, the specifics are the things that are going to be hard. Changing the age of majority, maybe. Minimum wage, we already——

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. You are working on that.

Mr. LAMPSON [continuing]. Have done.

I want to talk at some point in time, and my time is up, but, Mr. Booker, I do want to find about Safe Place, because we have Project Safe Place in my congressional district.

And I want to find out the comparisons. I know that it started in Louisville, Kentucky, at the YMCA, a great project. And then, obviously, some work that Ms. Alberts is doing on pornography that we would also like to question about.

But I just want to thank the chairwoman for allowing me to participate in this committee hearing today.

Thank you so much. It is a great set of presenters.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you, Mr. Lampson.

Just to let you know, we are going to go through, if it is all right with the witnesses, another set of questions. Not everybody wants to ask questions, but some of us do.

As I told the witnesses earlier, I have a markup, so if I get up and leave, it is not anything that you said, and one of my colleagues will take over the chair.

One of the things, listening to all of this, how much federal money do you actually get for the shelters themselves, or how do you operate the shelters? Where do the bricks and mortar come from?

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. Well, I can speak for myself. I think I will speak for many of the shelters across the country. Our communities are wonderful supporters of the service that we do.

The federal money that we receive does not cover the cost of the services. It is the seed money that opens the door for other things. The shelter-specific money, in my case, covers about half of the ongoing expenses within our agency.

I find money through private sources, through grants, through fees, through any other way I can to supplement those dollars. But the federal money is a base that we work from.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. The other reason that I am asking is because I sit on Financial Services, and with that we are starting a new program this year that will follow through, and I have to look into it and I have to bring it up to my chairman on that particular committee.

But being when we are talking about, especially those that are transiting from "a young teenager" to that 18 to 21, when that seems to be the most vulnerable time for a lot of these young people, that there should be some sort of housing that could come out of HUD.

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. Well, every community deals with that difference. CDBG has been, for years, a good friend for many of us in helping to fund bricks and mortar, at least in our community, using our community section eight has been a place that we also used.

Those kind of resources are out there if you can get to them. In our community, the one I come from, it is very friendly for those things, but every community isn't that way.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. But from that transition age, from 18 to 21, is it better for them to have their own apartment, because you had mentioned at 18 it is kind of hard to be on your own, or would it be better that there would be almost like a group home

type thing, with three or four young people together and maybe one house mother, house dad?

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. There are many, many wonderful program models, including all that you said. There are apartment complexes across the country that have developed it. Kids have their own little piece of that apartment complex. There are housing units that are, again, the example you gave, many kids live there and there are staff members that come and go.

I think the key to all this is that caring adult more than anything else. All these programs are just different environments. Is there one that works for every child, absolutely not.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Does anyone else have any?

The other thing, just going through, thinking about what each and every one of you has said, from a young child, teenage years, foster homes, shelters. We also deal with juvenile justice on this committee.

Last week, we passed mental parity. Hopefully, we will have resources out there to help, again, more students.

But when a young person is in the juvenile justice system, or a young person might even be in prison, they come out and they are homeless. And they would have a record, which there is a big debate going on in Congress, because a lot of times then they can't get a job.

Prison, if you really look at the term, means rehabilitation, depending on what the crime was, obviously. But a lot of our young people that do go to prison, and I talk to my correction guys all the time, one of the things that they are lacking is they need mental health, most of them, and they need to get a high school education because most of them have learning problems.

So, again, when I say I look at things holistically, my mind is going from one pot to the other pot and how do we bring it all together? I think we have our work cut out for us on this committee on how we are going to be able to pull these things out.

And one of the things that Mr. Platts and I have tried to do on this committee is to have more joint hearings. When we did juvenile justice, we brought in the Juvenile Justice Committee also, so we had a joint hearing so we can try and figure out, how can we work together? And I hope that we will be able to continue doing that in the future for other hearings.

Mr. Platts?

Mr. PLATTS. Thank you, Madam Chair.

As a parent, one of the things that has just been, I guess, startling in both the testimony, again, written and oral, is just the numbers. The national numbers of 600,000-plus missing in a year, the 1.6 million-plus runaways.

In the survey, Ms. Krahe-Eggleston, that you referenced in your testimony, that 6 percent are 12 or under in a typical year, seeking your services, and especially startling that 28 percent had attempted suicide.

As a nation, the alarm bell should be going off, when you look at number after number, and certainly each of you understand that. And we need to do a better job at it.

I don't know if you can give me an answer on how we can do a better job, and it is the funding side. For the various programs, I

don't know if you have available to you today or a ballpark of what you spend per child that you serve in a year on average and what percentage, in a percent standpoint, or a dollar standpoint, is from either the federal government specifically from these programs that we are talking about reauthorizing and funding or from taxpayers, federal state and local.

And that may not be something that you readily have available.

Ms. ALBERTS. I can tell you right off the bat, it costs us about $10 per client per year, and we get zero of any kind of government funding. It is all private.

So the passion I hope that you hear in my testimony and what I am talking about, it is there always and this is to me why I lie awake at night. It is not only these missing kids and the roughly 4 to 8 percent that will never be located in our country, but the fact that I, unfortunately at times throughout the year wonder where my next paycheck is going to come from.

Because, again, I am going to use that patchwork quilt corollary for our budget is like that. We are literally scrambling constantly, looking for funds and trying not to do what unfortunately I have seen programs do in the past, which is mission drift and have their mission follow funding as opposed to seeking funds that actually do fit the mission.

But none of these things are easy answers. Like I said, 27 years of nonprofit management, and these social issues are dramatic. I really applaud your efforts to bite off a big piece of this, but, again, I am going to tell you, It is communication and collaboration, as well as funding and caring, committed folks that will stay in the field.

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. In my written testimony, there are some examples of cost-benefit on a national, especially with the Transitional Living Services. So you could pull some of that information, or we could get you some more on that line.

But, most of us, it is a combination of resources that make this work. Because the RHY funds have been flat for so very long, in order to continue to do the work we do, we have to figure out ways to supplement other ways.

And if I just want to add a little bit to something that was just mentioned, I know I am taking up your time. But the issue of work force is a huge issue for us. And I know that there are some issues on the table around college and waiving——

Mr. PLATTS. Forgiveness and things?

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. That would be a huge gift in our field. You would have more people coming to our field. And that work force issue is one that as an executive director I am challenged with daily, daily.

Mr. PLATTS. Thank you.

Mr. ROLLE. Can I just say to that?

Mr. PLATTS. Yes, sure.

Mr. ROLLE. I just want to second the last thing she said. Go back to that innovation, it means innovator. That is the same work that I do with the Hip-Hop Project. The Hip-Hop culture has transcended from this subculture within the United States to a global culture, and all of the young people respond to that.

One of the things—Madam Chairperson just left—that she said was that she tried do this kind of joint work, meaning bringing the stuff that is going on in the jails with the social services.

So it is the same thing we are finding in education, that a lot of people don't want to get in education, or kids don't think that that is cool, to be in education and understand their work. So a lot of the work that I am doing within hip-hop is to try to explain to these artists, and work with young people before they become these successful artists that their work is joint.

Jay-Z, do you know who Jay-Z is? Somebody like Jay-Z, who is like God out there in the realm of hip-hop and the idol of those guys who are going to jail, half of the reason they are going to jail is they want to be the next Jay-Z. But they don't know that Jay-Z may not realize the power that he has.

If he said, "We are going to go to school." Or the fact, if he was here today, the power and influence that he can have with what he has within the culture of hip-hop that is global to really say something and do something.

So I just say that I second what she says in that the field of education, the field of social work, is not cool to get into mainly because people don't feel that they can take care of their families. It is something that they are doing unless there is just a passion there.

Mr. PLATTS. And I see my time is up.

And maybe just a final comment, Mr. Chairman, and it kind of follows on Kazi's kind of broad picture here, is that while today's hearing is specifically the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, Missing Children's Assistance Act, that issues, mental health parity that the chair had referenced.

There is legislation that Danny Davis and I are sponsoring, education begins at home. It is about teaching parenting skills to low-income new parents, to how to establish a good home setting for their newborns, their children, counseling services in our schools.

All those in the end relate to kind of the underlying problems that drive to this issue. And that while we are focused on these acts, that we also need to be advocates and pursuing those issues, as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GRIJALVA [presiding]. Thank you, sir.

And let me turn to Mr. Yarmuth for any additional questions you might have.

Mr. YARMUTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one thing I would like to pursue.

We talk a lot about numbers in this topic, and I think the value of this hearing is to hear from Kazi and Rusty, people who put a human face on these stories, but numbers are important when we are talking about legislation and planning and budgeting and so forth.

But I would like to ask Mr. Berg, is the methodology we use to kind of make estimates about homeless, runaway kids in this country adequate, or are there some things that we ought to be doing to give us a better, more accurate picture of what we are dealing with?

Mr. BERG. You can draw some conclusions from the evidence that exists, but I think there is definitely a need for a better job of knowing how big the problem is and some of the other dimensions of it. I think the adult homeless system has been working a lot on that over the last few years.

The system that is in place in the runaway, homeless youth programs is good and provides a lot of good data, but not everyone is in that system. I think there is a lot to be said to getting a better handle and investing a little bit on getting a better handle on the size of the problem.

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Allen, you have dealt with this, too. What are your thoughts?

Mr. ALLEN. Yes, I think there is a significant need for better data across the board. In the area of missing children, what is called runaway, thrown away children, the Justice Department research, it is done once a decade. So we are still citing data from 1999 research, which was released in 2000.

One of the things that we are working on now with various parts of the Justice Department is I think it is very important that there be an annualized data set, drawn from existing data sources.

One of the problems right now is that the NCIC reports, the National Crime Information Center, reorts at the FBI really don't break out reported missing children by usable categories. So it is a huge challenge, but frankly I think there ought to be numbers in this field, just like there are numbers in the Uniform Crime Reports that tell us how many burglaries and how many auto thefts there are a year. Because we need to be able to track this year to year to have a better sense of whether we are making progress or not.

Mr. YARMUTH. Okay, thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Oh, I am sorry.

Ms. ALBERTS. I just want to second that emotion. This is the only field that had the dearth of information and data. When I ran the substance abuse program, I could wake up on any day and tell you roughly how many kids were using what drug in the high schools. The data, particularly funding sources, they want that data. They don't want it to just be anecdotal, I know we are doing great stuff and here is why. We need that data.

Thank you, that is huge.

Mr. BERG. And I think this relates to what Mr. Grijalva said before, which is the feeling of sort of like we have had this problem forever and we just learned to tolerate it.

On homelessness, people support doing something about homeless. They support it a lot, but they believe there is nothing that can be done, which is not the case. But we need to be able to have data to show people, show the public, that we are succeeding at this. We have programs that work. We can have whole communities that are reducing the number of homeless people.

Without a functioning data system, or without a very good data system, you won't be able to make that case.

Mr. YARMUTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, sir.

And let me turn to Mrs. Biggert for any questions she might have.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just wanted to ask Rusty, after you have listened to all of the talk here, if you have any ideas on how best to spread the word about the Safe Place for other children who have found themselves in the same situation. From all this talk, I think you were very fortunate to have found that place.

Mr. BOOKER. I think so far they are doing good, but they could make a lot of improvements. The public signs that they have in Louisville, they have them on TARC buses, the libraries. Safe Place, White Castle donated $30,000 to Safe Place, and that White Castle was made a place where a child or a teenager can go and ask for a Safe Place to get help.

But I feel that there are more places and more things that can be done, and we all need to work together to see what can be done.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Well, I really was taken by your story, and I have to ask you, did your brother had the opportunities that you had? Did he do all right?

Mr. BOOKER. My brother is currently locked up until he is 18. And, yes, he did have some of the opportunities I had, but he really had nobody to help him after he got through those opportunities.

Mrs. BIGGERT. A while back, after Columbine, we had a task force here of members of Congress. We heard from a lot of experts and did field hearings. But the one thing that was so true is that violence begets violence and it usually starts with the back of a hand, and that is usually a parent.

We see all the things that happen and they are so terrible, so I really applaud you for finding your way and hope that there will be a lot of other children that will be able to do that.

Thank you for being here.

I yield back.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you.

Mr. Lampson, questions?

Mr. LAMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wanted you to talk about Safe Place, and you did, so thank you, you got that in.

Ms. Alberts, we spend, $7,000, $8,000 a year on a child in school. What does the state of Texas appropriate each year for programs for children who are not in school?

Ms. ALBERTS. Not enough.

Mr. LAMPSON. Do you have any idea?

Ms. ALBERTS. We usually fall pretty low on the totem pole. There are no specific funds in the state of Texas for the type of work that we do.

Mr. LAMPSON. No specific funds available for what you are doing.

Ms. ALBERTS. No. We have worked a lot in the runaway community with Covenant House and some of the law enforcement agencies, and there are some small bits of money that they piece together, but there is nothing comprehensive.

Mr. LAMPSON. How do they get it? Do they get it through grants?

Ms. ALBERTS. Yes, yes.

Mr. LAMPSON. As far as an appropriation that would go to every county or to every child, there is not. Do you know of any programs at the federal level?

Ms. ALBERTS. No, I am not familiar with any program that looks at that at all, that deals with that, that services that.

Mr. LAMPSON. And what about at the federal level? Is there anything that anyone knows about? Obviously, there is some appropriation at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, but is there anything that filters down to Child Protective Services or other programs that will be able to grab hold of a child and help point them into a program?

When I mentioned the little girl a while ago, we got her into three different places to live. And the little-bitty bit of funds that they had ran out and all three programs closed while she was participating. We had to get one and move her to another and so on.

People try, they are, but if they don't have the resources to be able to do it, it is not going to succeed.

What were you going to say, Ms. Eggleston?

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. Many states do nothing, many states and local communities.

There are a few states, and I am not sure of the specifics. I can tell you which states do and don't. I can get that information to you.

In Arizona, we have about less than $0.5 million a year that is spread out amongst our communities.

Mr. LAMPSON. What is the best state that you know of? And is there one that could be piloted, or could be copied, where we find some way that we might do something that would be beneficial?

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. I don't know that I can tell you that right now, but I can give that to you.

Mr. LAMPSON. I would appreciate it if you would. Would you all rather see grant programs and let the people somehow or other apply for money? Or would you like to see some kind of mechanism to get money into specific agencies that might be able to help locally? Would you comment on that? Anybody, all of you.

Ms. KRAHE-EGGLESTON. What would I like? Any of those would be nice.

I think recognizing those groups in the communities that have experience. I think the challenges that we have with grants, state grants, have to do with procurement issues and laws around how money can be sorted out through the states. At least in our state, there are laws around how money can be allocated.

It just can't go to any program. You have to go through a process to get it. Private money, we are always applying. Most of us apply a lot to a lot of private—you heard White Castle. White Castle does stuff in Kentucky. Our local electric company in Tucson does a lot for a lot of us. We need all of them.

Mr. LAMPSON. Ms. Alberts, were you going to say something?

Ms. ALBERTS. I was going to say, one of the things that we talked about, I thought about something after we finished. The Harris County Sheriff's Office is the only agency in our area that has a specific runaway division. They actually have a squad of officers to deal with that problem, and it is very successful in how it can be, given its scope.

And they are tied in well with the social service agencies in the area. But I think runaway and homeless youth, I think looking at what happens to a child, the bulk of the resources for a law enforcement agency are spent picking up those runaways and taking them home.

That is another of those areas where it is not against the law to run away. There is nothing that can be done. Occasionally a judge will say somebody has to do community service or something. I think that is another one of those places that we might look at trying to figure out how to intervene there.

Mr. ALLEN. A quick comment, and I think this is more historic, and these folks may be able to correct me. But what we hear from the runaway community is that the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act is helpful in terms of a certain level of support, but particularly in the areas of the more difficult problems, the chronic runners, there becomes a place where there really aren't resources to address the kids with the most serious needs.

We hear from communities all the time, that they are funding for shelters for the first time a kid runs, or for the early part of the episode. But the really longer term, the chronic, the most serious challenge. Really, this is the problem that is answered simply through resources.

Mr. LAMPSON. If there were going to be a comprehensive study, who would do it? Who should do it? About what you were speaking of a little while ago, Mr. Allen?

Mr. ALLEN. Are you talking about data? Are you talking about a study of what the best models are and where the gaps are?

Mr. LAMPSON. Both.

Mr. ALLEN. Well, historically, as it relates to data, what the government has done has been to go to universities and God bless universities and the work they do, but that is expensive. I think we need to develop a systematized way to capture data, reported data, and interpret it.

For example, that is what we are trying to do on the whole area of missing children. There are police reports all the time. Maybe we don't have it for all 50 states, but maybe it can be extrapolated——

Mr. LAMPSON. Would the National Center be the appropriate place to go for that, or would one of the federal agencies?

Mr. ALLEN. I think the National Center, with the National Institute of Justice, or the Bureau of Justice Statistics or somebody like that, the people who are already capturing data.

As it relates to the runaway and homeless youth community, I am not sure, but I think that same model can be replicated. In terms of who should develop the models for identifying where the gaps are, I think you go to the leadership of the national runaway community and you gather the experts and you say this is where services are adequate, this is where services are not. Here is the void and here is what it would cost to fill that void, based upon the numbers of kids who are identified in these services.

Mr. LAMPSON. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Let me on behalf of the chair, the ranking member and the members of this committee thank each and every one

of you for your testimony. It is invaluable as we go through this reauthorization process.

Much of what was said, I personally felt that the issues that we talked about and the chair mentioned it, not only this reauthorization, but how we are conscious with every piece of legislation that we are working with, that we are integrating this group of young people into that process, be it health care, be it education, be it the issue of economics, be it the issue of reentry for people coming out of the justice system. I think all those are valuable things that we need to be conscious of as we go along.

But, with that said, let me thank you very much as we go forward.

As we conclude this hearing, I would like to invite everyone to the reception that is being sponsored by the National Network for Youth, shining a light on youth homelessness. Mr. Platts and Chairwoman McCarthy are serving as honorary co-sponsors of this event.

One of our witnesses, Kazi, will speak with homeless youth of D.C. and share clips from the documentary, the Hip-Hop Project. It is going to be in room B-369 of the Rayburn Building, of this building, at 6:30.

As previously ordered, members will have 14 days to submit additional materials for the hearing. Any member who wishes to submit follow-up questions in writing to the witnesses should coordinate with majority staff within the requisite time.

And, with that, without objection, this hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Altmire follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Jason Altmire, a Representative in Congress From the State of Pennsylvania

Thank you, Madam Chair, for holding this hearing on runaway, homeless and missing children.

It is estimated that between 1 million and 1.7 million youth experience homelessness on a yearly basis. Some of these children are homeless for a few nights while others are homeless for long periods of time. Youth who become homeless run a high risk of being physically or sexually abused and are also more likely than their peers to engage in high risk behaviors.

Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act authorizes federal programs that help combat youth homelessness. As Congress reauthorizes the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act I hope that we study how to improve the programs authorized by title III.

Thank you again, Madam Chair, for holding this hearing. I look forward to continuing to work with you on this important issue. I yield back the balance of my time.

[Whereupon, at 5:05 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

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