

**PROTECTING AMERICA'S YOUTH: AN UPDATE
FROM THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING
AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD,
ELEMENTARY, AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE WORKFORCE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, JULY 15, 2014

Serial No. 113-62

Printed for the use of the Committee on Education and the Workforce



Available via the World Wide Web:

www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/committee.action?chamber=house&committee=education

or

Committee address: *<http://edworkforce.house.gov>*

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

88-650 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2016

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Publishing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512-1800; DC area (202) 512-1800
Fax: (202) 512-2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402-0001

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

JOHN KLINE, Minnesota, *Chairman*

Thomas E. Petri, Wisconsin	George Miller, California,
Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, California	<i>Senior Democratic Member</i>
Joe Wilson, South Carolina	Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, Virginia
Virginia Foxx, North Carolina	Rubén Hinojosa, Texas
Tom Price, Georgia	Carolyn McCarthy, New York
Kenny Marchant, Texas	John F. Tierney, Massachusetts
Duncan Hunter, California	Rush Holt, New Jersey
David P. Roe, Tennessee	Susan A. Davis, California
Glenn Thompson, Pennsylvania	Raúl M. Grijalva, Arizona
Tim Walberg, Michigan	Timothy H. Bishop, New York
Matt Salmon, Arizona	David Loebsack, Iowa
Brett Guthrie, Kentucky	Joe Courtney, Connecticut
Scott DesJarlais, Tennessee	Marcia L. Fudge, Ohio
Todd Rokita, Indiana	Jared Polis, Colorado
Larry Bucshon, Indiana	Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan,
Trey Gowdy, South Carolina	Northern Mariana Islands
Lou Barletta, Pennsylvania	Frederica S. Wilson, Florida
Joseph J. Heck, Nevada	Suzanne Bonamici, Oregon
Mike Kelly, Pennsylvania	Mark Pocan, Wisconsin
Susan W. Brooks, Indiana	Mark Takano, California
Richard Hudson, North Carolina	
Luke Messer, Indiana	
Bradley Byrne, Alabama	

Juliane Sullivan, *Staff Director*
Megan O'Reilly *Minority Staff Director*

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD, ELEMENTARY, AND
SECONDARY EDUCATION

TODD ROKITA, Indiana, *Chairman*

John Kline, Minnesota	David Loebsack, Iowa,
Thomas E. Petri, Wisconsin	<i>Ranking Member</i>
Virginia Foxx, North Carolina	Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, Virginia
Kenny Marchant, Texas	Carolyn McCarthy, New York
Duncan Hunter, California	Susan A. Davis, California
David P. Roe, Tennessee	Raúl M. Grijalva, Arizona
Glenn Thompson, Pennsylvania	Marcia L. Fudge, Ohio
Susan W. Brooks, Indiana	Jared Polis, Colorado
Bradley Byrne, Alabama	Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan,
	Northern Mariana Islands

C O N T E N T S

	Page
Hearing held on July 15, 2014	1
Statement of Members:	
Loebsack, Hon. Dave, a Representative in Congress from the State of Iowa	4
Prepared statement of	5
Rokita, Hon. Todd, Chairman, Subcommittee On Early Childhood, Ele- mentary, and Secondary Education	1
Prepared statement of	3
Statement of Witnesses:	
Ryan, John, D., Dr., President and CEO, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Alexandria, VA	7
Prepared statement of	9
Additional Submissions:	
Questions submitted for the record by:	
Loebsack, Hon. David, a Representative in Congress from the State of Iowa	35
Walberg, Hon. Tim, a Representative in Congress from the State of Michigan	36
Mr. Ryan's response to questions submitted for the record	38

**PROTECTING AMERICA’S YOUTH: AN UPDATE
FROM THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING
AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN**

**Tuesday, July 15, 2014
U.S. House of Representatives,
Subcommittee on Early Childhood,
Elementary, and Secondary Education,
Committee on Education and the Workforce,
Washington, D.C.**

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:04 a.m., in Room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Todd Rokita [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Rokita, Kline, Petri, Foxx, Roe, Thompson, Brooks, Loeb sack, McCarthy, Fudge, and Polis.

Also present: Representatives Walberg and Guthrie.

Staff Present: Janelle Belland, Coalitions and Members Services Coordinator; Kathlyn Ehl, Legislative Assistant; Lindsay Fryer, Professional Staff Member; Amy Raaf Jones, Director of Education and Human Resources Policy; Cristin Datch Kumar, Professional Staff Member; Nancy Lock, Chief Clerk; Daniel Murner, Deputy Press Secretary; Brian Newell, Communications Director; Krisann Pearce, General Counsel; Lauren Reddington, Deputy Press Secretary; Mandy Schaumburg, Education Deputy Director and Senior Counsel; Alissa Strawcutter, Deputy Clerk; Tylease Alli, Minority Clerk/Intern and Fellow Coordinator; Jamie Fasteau, Minority Director of Education Policy; Scott Groginsky, Minority Senior Education Policy Advisor; Eunice Ikene, Minority Labor Policy Associate; Brian Kennedy, Minority General Counsel; and Brian Levin, Minority Press Secretary.

Chairman ROKITA. A quorum being present, the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education will come to order.

Good morning, everyone. We are pleased to hear today from Mr. John Ryan, the president and chief executive officer of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, or NCMEC, correct? Mr. Ryan will give us an update on NCMEC’s important work and how a number of legislative changes enacted last year are enhancing the efforts of this vital organization.

At a ceremony opening the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, President Ronald Reagan said quote, “All Americans, and especially our youth, should have the right and the op-

portunity to walk our streets, to play, and to grow, and to live their lives without being at risk,” unquote. Spoken 30 years ago, President Reagan’s words are just as true now as they were back then.

And if we are truly fighting for all people so that they can build better lives for themselves and their families, one of the key things we must be doing, is everything we can to enhance the safety of their children.

No child should be afraid to walk home from school, hang out with friends at the mall, or surf the Internet. Yet, sadly, we know that is just not the case. Too often a predator is lurking in the shadows ready to do harm.

Each year, thousands of children go missing or fall victim to sexual exploitation and other heinous crimes. As the father of two young boys, I cannot fathom the pain and suffering these families are forced to bear. No one can, but we can do something about it.

For 30 years, a national public-private partnership has worked to protect children and safely return victims to their families. NCMEC is at the center of this vital effort. The organization provides services, resources, and other assistance to victims of abduction and sexual exploitation, as well as their families and those who serve them. The center’s 24-hour CyberTipline has provided law enforcement with more than 2.3 million leads of suspected child sexual exploitation. On its own, this would constitute a stellar record, but the tip line is only one part of a larger effort. The center also manages a national database on missing children, organizes case management teams to serve as a single point of contact for families, and offers training and technical assistance to law enforcement and professionals working in health care and the juvenile justice system. These are just a few of the services and support provided each and every day. The only way to describe the work of NCMEC’s staff is heroic. They are making a difference in the lives of countless children and families. In fact, just this year, I read that in partnership with the FBI and the Department of Justice, NCMEC participated in Operation Cross Country VIII. This week-long national campaign led to the arrest of 281 child traffickers and the rescue of 168 children, besting its work from the prior year.

However, we all know that despite these achievements, more work needs to be done. To help support that effort, last year Congress passed the E. Clay Shaw, Jr. Missing Children’s Assistance Reauthorization Act. This legislation extended our partnership with NCMEC while providing additional accountability and oversight protections. The law also includes reforms to encourage greater coordination between law enforcement, States, and schools. As one of many partners, Congress cannot stop there. There is more that can and should be done on behalf of these vulnerable youth. And toward that end, a number of important legislative proposals were introduced that will help strengthen our commitment to the youth who are victims of sex trafficking. While no legislation can provide a perfect solution, the bills put forward last week will move our country in the right direction. Protecting children has been and must remain a national priority.

Mr. Ryan, I would like to thank you and your staff for the—for yours and their hard work and dedication. As a committee, Con-

gress, and Nation, let's continue working together so we can, as President Reagan said, turn the tide on these hateful crimes.

And with that, I will now recognize the senior Democratic member of the subcommittee, Congressman David Loebsack, for his opening remarks.

Congressman.

[The statement of Chairman Rokita follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Todd Rokita, Chairman, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education

Good morning. We are pleased to hear today from Mr. John Ryan, the president and chief executive officer of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children or NCMEC. Mr. Ryan will give us an update on NCMEC's important work and how a number of legislative changes enacted last year are enhancing the efforts of this organization.

At a ceremony opening the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, President Ronald Reagan said, "All Americans, and especially our youth, should have the right and the opportunity to walk our streets, to play and to grow and to live their lives without being at risk." Spoken 30 years ago, President Reagan's words are just as true now as they were back then.

If we are truly fighting for all people, so that they can build better lives for themselves and their families, one of the key things we must help them with is the safety of their children.

No child should be afraid to walk home from school, hang out with friends at the mall, or surf the Internet. Yet sadly we know that's just not the case. Too often a predator is lurking in the shadows, ready to do harm. Each year thousands of children go missing or fall victim to sexual exploitation and other heinous crimes. As the father of two young boys, I cannot fathom the pain and suffering these families are forced to bear. No one can, but we can do something about it.

For 30 years a national public-private partnership has worked to protect children and safely return victims to their families. NCMEC is at this center of this vital effort. The organization provides services, resources, and other assistance to victims of abduction and sexual exploitation, as well as their families and those who serve them.

The center's 24-hour Cyber Tipline has provided law enforcement with more than 2.3 million leads of suspected child sexual exploitation. On its own this would constitute a stellar record, but the tip line is only one part of a larger effort. The center also manages a national database on missing children, organizes case management teams to serve as a single point of contact for families, and offers training and technical assistance to law enforcement and professionals working in health care and the juvenile justice system.

These are just a few of the services and support provided each and every day. The only way to describe the work of NCMEC's staff is heroic; they are making a difference in the lives of countless children and families. In fact, just this year, in partnership with the FBI and Department of Justice, NCMEC participated in Operation Cross Country VIII. This week-long national campaign led to the arrest of 281 child traffickers and the rescue of 168 children – besting its work from the prior year.

However, we all know that despite these achievements, more work needs to be done. To help support that effort, last year Congress passed the E. Clay Shaw, Jr. Missing Children's Assistance Reauthorization Act. Enacted with overwhelming bipartisan support, the legislation extended our partnership with NCMEC while providing additional accountability and oversight protections. The law also includes reforms to encourage greater coordination between law enforcement, states, and schools.

As one of many partners, Congress cannot stop there. There is more that can and should be done on behalf of these vulnerable youth. Toward that end, a number of important legislative proposals were introduced that will help strengthen our commitment to youth who are victims of sex trafficking. While no legislation can provide a perfect solution, the bills put forward last week will move our country in the right direction.

Protecting children has been and must remain a national priority. Mr. Ryan, I would like to thank you and your staff for their hard work and dedication. As a committee, Congress, and nation, let's continue working together so we can, as President Reagan said, "turn the tide on these hateful crimes."

With that, I will now recognize the senior Democrat of the subcommittee, Congressman David Loebsack, for his opening remarks.

Mr. LOEBSACK. I thank the chair for convening today's important oversight hearing.

And I thank you, Mr. Ryan, for joining us today to provide an update on the activities National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, NCMEC. As a father and grandfather, I, too, can only imagine the terror experienced by the parents of a missing child. The parents in the midst of this trauma need the full support of law enforcement, of schools, and other programs designed to locate and recover missing or exploited children. And of course, this is where the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children comes in.

Since its creation in 1984, through the Missing Children's Assistance Act, this private, nonprofit organization has provided assistance, outreach, and support to missing and exploited children and their families. NCMEC is tasked with coordinating Federal efforts to locate, recover, or reunite missing children with families as well as efforts to reduce and end child sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Founded in response to several high-profile child abductions, the center works with law enforcement to rapidly respond to the approximately 10,000 to 13,000 missing children reports they receive each year. NCMEC is also a partner in the AMBER Alert program, the Nation's child abduction alert system, named for Amber Hagerman, a 9-year old abducted and murdered in Arlington, Texas, in 1996. The alerts are distributed widely via radio, television, email, text message and highway traffic signs. As of this May, 692 children have been successfully recovered as a result of AMBER Alerts. Just last week, three missing girls in Iowa were recovered thanks to a swiftly dispatched AMBER Alert.

Further, NCMEC offers training and technical assistance to law enforcement in identifying sex offenders, provides guidance and information to community partners on how to effectively locate and identify missing children and operates a tip line for reporting missing children.

In recent years, the center has seen its workload relating to cases of sexual exploitation of children increase dramatically, unfortunately. In fact, the number of complaints of child sex trafficking increased 1,000 percent from 2004 to 2008. Additionally, the Internet has increased the risk of youth exploitation and Internet crimes against children, and child pornography cases continue to rise.

Last September, Congress reauthorized the Missing Children's Assistance Act and updated the role of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to reflect this evolving landscape. One of the most important provisions of this reauthorization was the addition of a requirement that NCMEC coordinate with the Interagency Council on Homelessness in order to address the high number of homeless youth who were victims of sex trafficking.

Runaway and homeless youth are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking. Last year, one in seven endangered runaways reported to NCMEC were likely sex trafficking victims.

Many of these youth were in the care of social services or foster care when they ran away and may have experienced sexual abuse before they left their homes. These children are at an increased risk of falling victim to sexual exploitation or engaged in what is called survival sex in exchange for food, shelter, or money. I am here to get an update on how NCMEC is coordinating with services for homeless and runaway youth to prevent children from ending up in these devastating circumstances. I also recognize there is still more we must do to prevent children from becoming victims in the first place.

Despite the best effort of NCMEC, more than 10,000 kids still go missing each year, and scores of children are forced into sexual exploitation and trafficking.

I look forward to hearing from you, Mr. Ryan, on what Federal supports do you believe needs to be to change this.

It is also important to note that the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act is up for reauthorization this year, but at this point, there has been no movement on this committee to carry out that reauthorization. This law complements The Missing Children's Assistance by providing targeted assistance to homeless youth through initiatives like the Basic Center Program, which provides youth with emergency shelter, food, clothing, and medical care. By reducing the number of runaways and homeless kids on the streets with nowhere to go, we can lower the risk of exploited children. As we move forward, it is critical that we provide NCMEC with all of the resources it needs to carry out its mission, including adequate funding.

Thank you again, Mr. Chair, for convening this hearing. As we can see, we have a lot of challenges ahead of us, and I look forward to hearing from you, Mr. Ryan, about how we can address those challenges. Thank you.

Chairman ROKITA. And I thank the gentleman.

[The statement of Mr. Loeb sack follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Dave Loeb sack, Subcommittee Early
Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education**

I thank the Chair for convening today's important oversight hearing, and thank Mr. Ryan for joining us today to provide an update on the activities of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

As a father and a grandfather, I cannot fathom the terror experienced by the parents of a missing child.

Parents in the midst of this trauma need the full support of law enforcement, schools, and other programs designed to locate and recover missing or exploited children.

That is where the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children comes in. Since its creation in 1984 through the Missing Children's Assistance Act, this private, non-profit organization has provided assistance, outreach and support to missing and exploited children and their families.

NCMEC is tasked with coordinating federal efforts to locate, recover or reunite missing children with families, as well as efforts to reduce and end child sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Founded in response to several high profile child abductions, the Center works directly with law enforcement to rapidly respond to the approximately ten to thirteen thousand missing children reports they receive each year.

NCMEC is also a partner in the Amber Alert program, the nation's child abduction alert system. Named for Amber Hagerman, a 9-year old abducted and murdered in Arlington, Texas in 1996, the alerts are distributed widely via radio, television, e-mail, text message and highway traffic signs.

As of this May, 692 children have been successfully recovered as a result of Amber Alerts.

Just last week, three missing girls in Iowa were recovered thanks to a swiftly dispatched Amber Alert.

Further, NCMEC offers training and technical assistance to law enforcement in identifying sex offenders, provides guidance and information to community partners on how to effectively locate and identify missing children, and operates a tip line for reporting missing children.

In recent years, the Center has seen its workload relating to cases of sexual exploitation of children increase dramatically. In fact, the number of complaints of child sex trafficking increased 1000 percent from 2004 to 2008.

Additionally, the Internet has increased the risk of youth exploitation and Internet crimes against children and child pornography cases continue to rise.

Last September, Congress reauthorized the Missing Children's Assistance Act and updated the role of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to reflect this evolving landscape.

One of the most important provisions of this reauthorization was the addition of a requirement that NCMEC coordinate with the Interagency Council on Homelessness in order to address the high number of homeless youth who are victims of sex trafficking.

Runaway and homeless youth are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking. Last year, one in seven endangered runaways reported to NCMEC were likely sex trafficking victims.

Many of these youth were in the care of social services or foster care when they ran and may have experienced sexual abuse before they left their homes.

These children are at an increased risk of falling victim to sexual exploitation or engage in "survival sex" in exchange for food, shelter or money.

I'm eager to get an update on how NCMEC is coordinating with services for homeless and runaway youth to prevent children from ending up in these devastating circumstances.

I also recognize that there is still more we must do to prevent children from becoming victims.

Despite the best effort of NCMEC, more than 10,000 kids still go missing each year and scores of children are forced into sexual exploitation and trafficking.

I look forward to hearing from Mr. Ryan on what federal supports he needs to change this.

It is also important to note that the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act is up for reauthorization this year, but at this point there has been no movement in this committee to do so.

This law complements the Missing Children's Assistance by providing targeted assistance to homeless youth through initiatives like the Basic Center Program, which provides youth with emergency shelter, food, clothing, and medical care.

By reducing the number of runaway and homeless kids in the streets with nowhere to go, we can lower the risk of exploited children.

As we move forward, it is critical that we provide the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children with all of the resources it needs to carry out its mission, including adequate funding.

I look forward to hearing from you, Mr. Ryan.

Chairman ROKITA. Pursuant to Committee Rule 7(c), all members will be permitted to submit written statements to be included in the permanent hearing record.

And without objection, the hearing record will remain open for 14 days to allow such statements and other extraneous material referenced during the hearing to be submitted for the official hearing record.

It is now my pleasure to introduce our distinguished witness. Mr. John Ryan is the president and chief executive officer of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children here in Washington, D.C. He has served in that position since December of 2013.

Mr. Ryan, before I recognize you to provide your testimony, let me briefly explain the lighting system. You will have 5 minutes to summarize your written testimony. Of course, when you begin, the

light will be green. When there is 1 minute left, it will be yellow. And then please make sure you are finished up by the red light. And that is more of a reminder for us up here sometimes than it is for you.

But after you are done, I will recognize members, who will each have 5 minutes to ask their questions, and out of deference to my colleagues, I am going to offer to take my questioning last so we can get theirs in first and accommodate their schedules.

So, with that, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF JOHN D. RYAN, PRESIDENT AND CEO, NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Mr. RYAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and distinguished members of the subcommittee.

I welcome this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and how our role is continually expanding to respond to evolving threats against our Nation's children. As you know, the National Center is a private, nonprofit organization designated by Congress to work in partnership with the Justice Department and funded by both the public and private sectors. The National Center is a unique public-private partnership working with government agencies, military branches, private industry, other nonprofits and public communities to build a coordinated national response to the problem of missing and sexually exploited children.

In April of this year, we commemorated 30 years of operation, during which our national hotline has handled more than 4 million calls. We have distributed literally billions of missing child posters, assisted law enforcement in the recovery of more than 160,000 missing children, coordinated the secondary distribution of AMBER Alerts, leading to the recovery of 695 abducted children and provided emotional support to affected families.

We have trained more than 300,000 law enforcement, criminal justice, military prosecutors, and healthcare professionals; processed more than 2.6 million CyberTipline reports of suspected child sexual exploitation; and reviewed more than 115 million images and videos of apparent child pornography to assist law enforcement in identifying these victimized children. To date, nearly 6,000 children have been identified through clues gleaned from these images.

The National Center has done a lot to make our children safer, but this organization is needed more now than ever. The world is a different place than it was 30 years ago. The Internet has transformed life in many positive ways, but it has also fostered an explosion of child pornography, literally images of violent sexual assaults against children, that are traded amongst offenders from all walks of life. The Internet has inspired new crimes, with names like online enticement and sextortion, and has become a thriving marketplace for selling children for sex.

Many children today have cell phones which function the same as computers. This is why it is vital that we work even more closely with our Nation's schools to help educate them about the dangers on the Internet and the real world. As part of our recent reauthorization, you gave us the authority to provide more resources to

State and local educational agencies. We have started to use this new authority to expand our programs to protect more children. Among our expanded initiatives with schools are new prevention curriculums, such as our KidSmartz prevention curriculum, which includes lessons plans and teaching tools set to launch this summer in time for the new school year. We have also been working to develop more age-specific, grade-level appropriate online curriculum and related educational resources for teachers to download from our Web site to use directly in their classrooms.

When I became president of NCMEC 2 years ago, I was appalled at the number of children being openly sold for sex on Web sites like backpage. Technology has changed the playing field. A customer can shop online from the privacy of a home or hotel room and a child will be delivered to their door.

As part of our work to combat child sex trafficking, we assist the FBI with Operation Cross Country as has been mentioned. That was headquartered at our center and it led to the recovery of 168 children over a 3-day period and the arrest of 281 pimps and predators. One example was a 16-year old who reported to her mother that she ran away from a group home because she was being recruited by gangs. The mother took the initiative, looked up the Backpage, saw the phone number advertised, called the National Center. We were able to track that phone number to three States in the span of less than 3 days. We passed that on to law enforcement. That girl was recovered during Operation Cross Country.

With respect to those children missing from foster care, there are current laws before Congress now that we urge Congress to pass. Right now, only two States have laws mandating the reporting of children missing from foster care. As has been pointed out, one in seven missing children are also being sexually exploited; 67 percent of those are coming from foster care children. No one is looking for these children. They cannot be found until they are looked for.

So I want to first thank this committee for focusing your efforts and giving us the ability to work more closely with schools, with teachers, with communities, especially those children with special needs.

One in 68, according to the CDC, suffer from autism. These children are wandering more than 50 percent of the time. Wandering is not the right term. They are bolting, and where are they bolting to, unsafe environments, such as bodies of waters. Forty-five children with autism have drowned in the last 2 years. We set up new protocols for first responders because the behavioral characteristics are quite different for these children. Parents need to be educated. First responders need to be educated, and we believe schools will play an important role in the prevention and awareness of this new phenomenon. It has reached epidemic proportions.

So, with that, Chairman, I devoted more time for Q and A because I think that is more important to focus on what is happening now, and how we think we can partner further with this committee. I want to thank you, though, for the reauthorization and the ability to meet these emerging challenges.

[The statement of Mr. Ryan follows:]

9

TESTIMONY

of

JOHN D. RYAN

PRESIDENT AND CEO

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

for the

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD, ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION

“PROTECTING AMERICA’S YOUTH: AN UPDATE FROM
THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN”

July 15, 2014

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I welcome the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the programs of The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to protect our nation's children and diminish the threat of child abduction and child sexual exploitation.

NCMEC was created as a private, non-profit organization in 1984 and designated by Congress to serve as the national clearinghouse on issues relating to missing and exploited children. In April of this year, NCMEC commemorated 30 years of operation during which we have handled more than four million calls for assistance to our 24/7 toll-free Call Center; distributed more than 589,000 individual missing child posters; helped parents and law enforcement on more than 208,000 missing child cases; assisted in the recovery of more than 196,000 missing children; coordinated the secondary distribution of AMBER Alerts, leading to the recovery of 688 children; trained over 305,000 law enforcement, criminal justice and healthcare professionals; received and processed more than 2.6 million CyberTipline reports of suspected child sexual exploitation; and reviewed more than 115 million images and videos of apparent child pornography to assist law enforcement's efforts to identify and rescue these victimized children.

NCMEC's success is a testament to Congress' unwavering commitment to the work NCMEC does, and in particular to this Committee's support as we continue expanding our public-private partnerships to help protect children from abduction and exploitation and introduce new prevention initiatives to educate parents, teachers and communities on how to keep children safer.

NCMEC's work with missing children is the historical core of our organization. Our work began in response to a series of tragic missing child cases, including the 1979 disappearance of 6-year-old Etan Patz in New York, the murder of 29 children and young adults in Atlanta in the early 1980s and the 1981 abduction and murder of 6-year-old Adam Walsh in Florida. As a movement emerged to create a national coordinated response to missing child cases, Congress enacted the Missing Children Act in 1982. The official opening of NCMEC two years later in 1984, and

Congress' authorization for NCMEC to serve as the national resource center and clearinghouse on missing and exploited children, enabled us to grow into the leading nonprofit organization in the U.S. working with federal, state and local government agencies, law enforcement, private industry, other non-profit organizations, educational and social service entities, communities, families and the professionals who serve them to fulfill 22 operational functions Congress has designated for NCMEC (42 U.S.C. § 5773). These functions include our newest initiatives to provide information and technical assistance to state and local educational agencies and state clearinghouses, especially relating to foster children missing from state care and missing children at risk for sex trafficking.

NCMEC's Missing Children Division works each case of a missing child on an individual basis to provide coordinated resources and technical assistance to law enforcement and support for the family of the missing child. No child is ever forgotten – no matter how long they have been missing. NCMEC recognizes that each type of missing child case, whether a family abduction, runaway or non-family abduction, requires a different approach and resources to provide the best chance of quickly recovering a child. NCMEC's 30 years of experience on missing child cases has taught us that children who run away, especially children who run away from state care, are particularly vulnerable to harm, including sex trafficking. We also have learned that children with special needs are especially at risk and often benefit from unique search protocols when they wander from safe environments. NCMEC has responded to what we have learned about these two particularly vulnerable populations of missing children by creating unique protocols and awareness programs to assist law enforcement on these cases.

As part of its work to combat child sex trafficking, NCMEC assists the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice on the Innocence Lost National Initiative. This initiative creates regional and local task forces to conduct "Operation Cross Country" sweeps and provide ongoing assistance in trafficking cases. Operation Cross Country VIII concluded on June 23, 2014 with the recovery of 168 child sex trafficking victims and the arrest of 281 suspected traffickers. The youngest child

recovered was just 11 years old and this year, for the first time, boys were among the victimized children recovered. To date Operation Cross Country has recovered more than 3,400 children who have been sexually exploited and sold for sex. NCMEC's primary role in the Innocence Lost Initiative is to serve as a clearinghouse for information about children who are exploited through sex trafficking; to provide analytical and technical assistance to law enforcement investigating these cases; and to provide case management support when we have a missing child who is being trafficked for sex.

Our experience with child sex trafficking cases shows this is a complex issue not susceptible to a single solution. The scope of the problem is difficult to accurately quantify due to the reluctance of victims to self-report and other challenges faced by law enforcement in measuring the incidence of this crime. Based on the case data NCMEC receives in our clearinghouse role, we know that approximately 81 percent of missing child reports to NCMEC involve endangered runaways; 1 out of 7 endangered runaways reported to NCMEC in 2013 were likely sex trafficking victims; and 67 percent of these children were in state care when they ran.

Because of the unique vulnerabilities of runaways and children missing from state care, NCMEC created our Child Sex Trafficking Team to provide dedicated and comprehensive analytical services to law enforcement on cases of missing children who may be linked to sex trafficking. One recent initiative is the creation of an introductory training program titled Child Sex Trafficking: Awareness & Response directed to law enforcement, child welfare agencies and other service providers. As an illustration of NCMEC's public-private partnership, this course was developed with federal funds and the first in-person deployment of the training in California was underwritten by a private donor.

NCMEC knows children recovered from sex trafficking often have only the clothes they are wearing. To provide these child victims with basic items they will need during the first hours and days of their recovery, we recently started providing "Hope Bags" to law enforcement and victim

coordinators to provide to recovered victims. Each Hope Bag contains a change of clothes and basic toiletry necessities. NCMEC is proud of our efforts to combat child sex trafficking, but more can be done, including: (1) comprehensive, widely-available training for educators, child welfare agencies, medical professionals, law enforcement, parents and community organizations on identifying and responding to children victimized, or at risk for victimization, by sex trafficking; (2) reporting of children missing from care by state child welfare agencies to law enforcement and then NCMEC; and (3) creation of a single source of comprehensive, current information on resources available nationwide for families and victims of child sex trafficking.

Another one of NCMEC's new initiatives relates to the unique dangers that arise when children with special needs wander, or elope, from safe environments. A recent CDC study estimated that as many as 1 in 68 children may be identified with an autism spectrum disorder. Because nearly half of children with autism will wander from a safe environment and more than one-third of children who wander are considered nonverbal, the safe recovery of a child with autism presents unique challenges for families, schools and caretakers, law enforcement and first responders. Recognizing the special endangerments that arise when a child with special needs goes missing, NCMEC has partnered with other non-profit organizations to create special search protocols and checklists for first responders and co-produce PSAs on missing children with autism. NCMEC is encouraged by the interest law enforcement and first responders have shown in NCMEC's special needs initiatives, but we know more can be done to promote public engagement and awareness of these issues among service providers, schools, caretakers and others who interact with special needs children.

NCMEC also has multiple programs to assist law enforcement, families, child victims and the professionals who serve them on cases of sexually exploited children. Our Exploited Children Division has two core programs to facilitate the reporting of child sexual abuse content and help identify current child victims and prevent future victimization. NCMEC's CyberTipline® is the

national mechanism for members of the public and electronic service providers to report suspected child sexual exploitation (18 USC § 2258A). In the 15 years since the CyberTipline was created, NCMEC has received and processed more than 2.6 million reports in eight categories: (1) possession, manufacture and distribution of child pornography; (2) online enticement of children for sexual acts; (3) child sex trafficking; (4) sex tourism involving children; (5) extrafamilial child sexual molestation; (6) unsolicited obscene material sent to a child; (7) misleading domain names; and (8) misleading words or digital images on the Internet. NCMEC staff review, add value and then make the reports available to law enforcement in appropriate jurisdictions for their potential review and investigation. Reports are triaged continuously to ensure that reports of children who may be in imminent danger get first priority. The number of CyberTipline reports continues to increase exponentially, from 326,310 in 2011; to 415,650 in 2012; to 505,280 in 2013.

NCMEC's Child Victim Identification Program serves as the central U.S. repository for information related to child victims depicted in sexually exploitive images and videos. Since CVIP was established in 2002, CVIP staff has reviewed more than 115 million child pornography images and videos to assist in law enforcement's efforts to identify children depicted in these images. To date, law enforcement has notified NCMEC of nearly 6,000 identified children, but we know there are many thousands of child victims who have yet to be identified and/or recovered, and there are new victims every day. The number of images forwarded to CVIP for review continues to increase dramatically. Last month alone, CVIP analysts received nearly 2.4 million images/videos for review. As NCMEC handles an increasing number of CyberTipline reports and CVIP requests for review of images, we believe it is important to ensure prosecutors and law enforcement have adequate tools to combat those who commercially profit from the online sexual exploitation of children and that children whose sexual abuse images continue to be distributed online are eligible for adequate recovery for the harm they continue to suffer.

In addition to the case management and analytical support NCMEC provides, we also offer

support to families whose child may be missing or a victim of sex trafficking or another form of sexual exploitation. These services are facilitated by NCMEC's master-level trained mental health and child welfare professionals. NCMEC also manages two voluntary initiatives to help families. NCMEC's Family Advocacy Outreach Network is a referral system of treatment professionals experienced in treating child victims of sexual abuse and other trauma from across the country who work with NCMEC to provide ongoing crisis management and therapy, including in-person intervention, to families and recovered victims on a sliding fee or pro-bono basis. NCMEC also supports families through trained volunteers as part of Team HOPE (Help Offering Parents Empowerment), a volunteer group of parents and family members who have experienced a missing or sexually exploited child or who have a child who is still missing and who provide peer support to other families.

NCMEC also provides reunification assistance when a child is recovered and families need crucial assistance in reintegrating the child back into the home. In addition to emotional support, NCMEC supports the physical reunification of recovered children and their families by administering the Victim Reunification Travel Program funded by the Department of Justice, Office of Victims of Crime and by working with private transportation partners to facilitate free domestic travel for reunification. This program also enables NCMEC to provide funds to families who must travel to reunite with their recovered child or attend a custody hearing in another country in the case of an international family abduction.

In 30 years of work, it has become clear to us that one of the first steps in protecting children is educating not only children, but also their families, teachers and communities about safety risks. To address this key priority, NCMEC continues to expand its safety and prevention programs for families, teachers and community leaders on child abduction, child sexual exploitation and Internet safety. NCMEC's main education program is the NetSmartz® Workshop, an interactive, educational safety resource for children ages five to 17. Through a series of age-appropriate games,

cartoons, videos, worksheets, safety pledges, and grade-specific handouts and teaching curriculums, NetSmartz prepares children to be safer online, especially when confronted with cyberbullying, inappropriate content, sexting, enticement and revealing too much personal information. Our safety programming is created to enable parents and educators to easily select particular aspects of the NetSmartz materials to share with children depending on time constraints and the child's age. NetSmartz has been successful at reaching a wide audience so far – over 5.2 million visits to NCMEC's NetSmartz websites and over 460,000 individual resources distributed – and NCMEC is always seeking new ways to expand its prevention messaging to those who have the most contact with children.

For example, one of NCMEC's newest initiatives, KidSmartz, will capitalize on our private-public partnerships to offer new abduction prevention and safety lessons to children in grades K-5. KidSmartz is set to launch this summer as a resource for teachers and parents/guardians to help children understand safety risks, learn about self-protection and feel empowered to report attempted abductions or other threatening behavior they may encounter on or offline. Because NCMEC's data indicates that approximately one third of attempted abductions occur to children between 10 and 14 years old who are traveling to/from school or a school-related activity, programs like KidSmartz are crucial to targeting school-age children and their parents/guardians and teachers for prevention education.

NCMEC has worked directly with nearly 15,000 schools and school districts in all 50 states to provide teachers with a vast array of no-cost materials and presentations, including safety pledges, interactive presentations, tip sheets, activity cards and other age and grade specific handouts. One teacher from Naples, Fla. recently told us: "I am the tech teacher at my school and used your site to teach my first and second graders about Internet safety. They loved your videos, and I used them to reinforce many important safety tips. They LOVE the characters you created. Thank you for creating such a kid-friendly site for teaching an important life skill as Internet safety. Everyone had

fun while learning.” Another teacher from Avondale, Ariz. wrote directly to praise Clicky, NetSmartz’s cartoon robot mascot: “Dear Clicky, I want to thank you for being such a great example for my students!!! Keep up the great work and we can’t wait to see what you come up with next.” With the Committee’s support, NCMEC looks forward to continuing our work with state and local educational agencies to target specific safety issues they see in their own communities.

Finally, NCMEC’s Take 25 campaign, created in honor of National Missing Children’s Day, annually recognized on May 25, encourages families to take 25 minutes to talk to their children about safety and abduction prevention and helps communities access the resources they need to raise awareness of missing and exploited children’s issues. Communities can participate by involving their community leaders, educators and trusted adults to pledge to take 25 minutes to talk to children about safety. Since March 17, 2014, the Take 25 Campaign website has received over 56,000 visits and distributed more than 280,000 hard copy resources.

NCMEC believes that every child deserves a safe childhood. In closing, Mr. Chairman, the National Center is grateful for your leadership and continuing support, and that of your colleagues, in our efforts to protect and educate children. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before your Committee and to share information about NCMEC’s programs to prevent and protect children from these devastating crimes.

Chairman ROKITA. And I thank Mr. Ryan. As I said earlier, I am going to defer my questions to the end and the chairman of the full committee is now recognized for 5 minutes, Mr. Kline.

Mr. KLINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Mr. Ryan, for being here. It was a pleasure to meet you and work with you when we were doing reauthorization. And as you know, I think that the center just does amazing, and almost unimaginable, unimaginably difficult and challenging work, so we thank you for that.

I am looking at a couple of things here. I have got a—I think probably provided by your office, a nice little chart talking about the National Center's statistics for Minnesota. And looking at the statistics since 1990, in Minnesota alone, NCMEC worked on 1,699 endangered runaways, 373 family abductions, 67 lost, injured, or otherwise missing, and so forth. That is one State and not that big a State where you are working all the time and doing, as I have said, unimaginably challenging and difficult work.

Speaking of Minnesota, in Minneapolis, we have a little company there called Lifetouch. It is a school portrait company, and you have arranged to work with them to help law enforcement and the media. How did that come about, and how does that work?

Mr. RYAN. Lifetouch actually approached us back in 2004. As you say, they are based in Minnesota. They are the largest national school photographers, and they are now global, as they grow. They stepped up on a voluntary basis, offered to take free photographs for families of their children that families could use and, with the assistance of Lifetouch, form a what they call a SmileSafe ID card, which the families can hold and has all of the relevant information, plus a photograph of their child.

In addition, Lifetouch with the parents' permission digitizes that photo and information, so when law enforcement is called upon to find a missing child, and we get that notice, the first thing we do to see if we have that photo and information on file. Invariably, we do now, because of Lifetouch. With this program, we found missing children in over 20 States because their child's photo was in Lifetouch's digitized inventory.

Mr. KLINE. Thank you. Again, another example of great innovation and progress. You are one of those agencies where everybody is busy all the time, coming up with new ideas and new approaches, because you are on a mission. And it is reassuring to know that you are there and that you have the relationships that you have with law enforcement.

You mentioned autism, and the increasing numbers of children with autism, and the things that you are doing. Can you expand a little bit, sort of my remaining time here, and tell me how this is different and how you developed partnerships to make this work? It has got to be fairly challenging.

Mr. RYAN. It is, Congressman. We learned from the first-responder community that the characteristics of a typical search for a missing child weren't applying in certain cases. And the common denominator they found was these children suffered from one of the syndromes of autism. These children are attracted to high-risk environments. When we use the term "wander," that comes from the discussion dealing with the elderly, when they go off and you know,

and typically, it is a benign situation. But with these children, they are literally bolting, in the blink of an eye, and they are attracted to bodies of water, to high-density traffic areas. And within seconds, they can be thrust into these environments, despite the best care of parents, despite the best response of the first-responder community. So we have learned that it is critical to educate the parents in terms of what measures they could take to safeguard this child, both within their home and within the schools, because these children are bolting from schools.

We saw that in New York City. Avonte Oquendo, last year, literally bolted from the classroom and later turned out went right in the East River. And what is the lesson learned there? Schools need to know what measures they can take to prevent a child like that from having open access and egress from that school. Who should be notified, you know, when these incidents occur? So we are focusing a lot of our attention and partnering with organizations like Autism Speaks. We are engaged on a PSA campaign to educate the community at large because the awareness level is not where it should be. The public will turn out to be the eyes and ears and first responders to this problem, but they need to know what to look for and how they should respond.

Mr. KLINE. Thank you.

I see my time is expired. I yield back.

Chairman ROKITA. The gentleman's time is expired.

The ranking member is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Ryan, thanks for being here again. I really appreciate this and the wonderful work that you folks are doing, and I just want to talk a little bit more about how the reauthorized Missing Children's Assistance Act is working and what more you might need from us. You know, we are often having discussions, arguments about funding and all of the rest. I like to say we are in a very highly constrained fiscal environment here in Washington, D.C. I think we can all agree to that. But you know, is there more that you can do? And if there were more funding, is there more that you could do, or are you pretty much at a point here where you recognize the reality that funding is in short supply, and the chances of maybe getting more probably aren't so great at this point? What is your sense of that?

Mr. RYAN. Well, one of the things NCMEC does well is do more with less. For instance, in the area of designing educational curriculums, we have our own in-house studio. We create the content that we use. We don't have to use third-party vendors that can be very expensive. We leverage our partnerships with a number of companies. They serve as the distribution platforms. Again, we are cutting into those costs, but where we need to be further engaged is getting in front of the schools on a nationwide basis, not on a community-by-community, even state-by-state, but on a nationwide approach because we have the age-appropriate messaging. It is not a one-size-fits-all. And we can track these kids from kindergarten through high school, because the nature of the problem is different. But we have—because we are the clearinghouse, we know the trends and patterns. We have the ability to design preventive messages. We have the ability to create the format, whether they be

games or lesson plans, so we need—you know, I think this committee is uniquely positioned to help us partner with the educational community to push these messages out.

Mr. LOEBSACK. I think it is great, and like the idea of a public-private partnership. I think we are, as a country, moving more in that direction all the time as well, given the limited resources that we have at the Federal level, whether it is on transportation or any number of other things. This is an area that, you know, clearly that seems to be working well. I would be interested in finding out from you if you could provide us some information or writing at some point sort of how it is that you judge how you are doing your job, what the metrics are, that kind of thing. If, you know, I could get that from you, if I could get that from you in writing, I think we would all probably appreciate that. I have no doubt you are doing a great job. You are doing your job and doing it about effectively as you possibly can.

Can you elaborate a little bit more on the educational aspect of this? You have already mentioned a number of things that you are doing with schools. There may be more things that you would like to do with schools, with public schools, and private schools for that matter as well. Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

Mr. RYAN. Sure. Where we think we can make a difference is train the trainers. In this case, the trainers would be the teachers. We know that they are in position to be an early-alert system. We learned here, close to where we are now, in Fairfax County one of the better school districts in the country, over a 3-year period, there was a major operation where gangs were recruiting high school students from the schools and trafficking them commercially through neighborhood and community hotels. These children were going home at night. They were going to school for the most part. But nobody was picking up on the signs. So we learned from that. We work with law enforcement. We then have the conversation with the teachers. What did you see that was different? Performance dropping off, coming in late, maybe bruises? It could have been very well dressed, flashy jewelry, the whole range of symptoms that if the teachers were made aware of what to look for, they then could intervene at an early stage and pass that information on.

Mr. LOEBSACK. I know at someplaces in Iowa, for example—my wife taught second grade for a long time. Teachers are mandatory reporters, too, and you know, that is something that is really important because teachers are in a situation, as you just said, where they are, you know, right there on the front lines. The school counselors, school nurses, a number of those folks are really critical. And if we can continue to do that across the country, I think it makes a heck of a lot of sense. Thank you so much.

My time is almost up. I am going to yield the rest of my time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROKITA. I thank the gentleman. The gentleman yields back.

The gentleman from Tennessee is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, thank you for what you do every day. And I have to tell you with our human trafficking bills that the Congress passed

in a bipartisan way just a few weeks ago, it really helped educate me about the enormity of this problem. I had no idea it was as large as it was. And I look at this graph that you have on your CyberTipline, and do you think—I mean, down here from 1998 or 2000, now it just, there is an astronomical increase.

Mr. RYAN. Right. And what is the reason for that? Is it because of a better awareness, do you think, because I can tell you, I was clueless about how enormous this problem is and how subtle you just very well described it could be in a school if you are not really paying attention, and don't know what to pay attention to. Somebody can be right there in front of you carrying on an apparently normal life and they are not carrying on a normal life.

Mr. RYAN. I think one of the critical factors that has caused the increase is the online classified ad platforms on the Internet, the Backpages of the world. This has provided a relatively inexpensive business model for pimps and predators to advertise their clients, minors, for sex. And for a modest investment, they are trafficking these children around the country, usually under the radar of local law enforcement because they are moving them from community to community, State to State, and these are children from all walks of life. The majority of them start off as endangered runaways, but some of them come from stable households. They are applying for jobs that they think may be modeling, or something in the entertainment business, and they are lured by these predators and taken then across the country. So it is in everybody's backyard. If people are not aware of it, they are not looking for it.

Mr. ROE. What is the way to—I didn't know what Backpage was 3 months ago, or 4 months ago. How do you go after those folks? One of the bills we passed was to go after the people who advertise. Is that an effective method to do it, because it is cheap, as you said, to put up a Web page.

Mr. RYAN. Currently, there are no regulations that they fall under, so unlike the responsible electronic service providers who have a legitimate business model, they choose not to know who their customer is. They turn a blind eye. If they see something that may look like potentially child pornography, they may make a preliminary report, but they are not searching their systems. So if they see a phone number associated with potentially illicit activity, well, search your system. That is not an isolated occurrence. That child associated with that number has probably popped up in multiple States as we saw in Operation Cross Country. So they are doing the bare minimum. So—

Mr. ROE. A wink and a nod is all they are doing.

Mr. RYAN. Exactly, precisely.

Mr. ROE. And one of the things we did, I think, in the bill is extremely important, is to take the victims, not make them criminals, but make them victims, and so they can turn themselves in and not be prosecuted. Some of the fears are probably they are afraid I will go to jail because I am engaged in something illegal. I thought that was a huge issue to take these children. They are not—they are victims of these crimes.

Mr. RYAN. You are 100 percent right, sir. And when they are treated like victims—they were not reporting, because they felt that the law enforcement was not a potential ally, a potential

threat. And the gap still exists though. When these minors are recovered, for instance, in Operation Cross Country, where do they go? Where are they placed? Because they are not in the criminal justice system now, which is good, but there is no hold over them. We don't want them going back to the same environment because the rate of recidivism is very high. That 24, 48-hour period is critical to put them in the right hands, to get them the care, the therapeutic care that they need. And I think this committee is well situated to identify those resources and agencies that we can partner with.

Mr. ROE. And there is a real shortage there, as I understand, as I learned about this.

The other thing I want you to, in my short time remaining, is talk about the missing from foster care. I would think that would be amazing to me, that only two States have any requirement that if a child walks away from foster care, that no one would know that. What can we do or what should States do to alleviate that?

Mr. RYAN. Sure. Presently, there is legislation in front of this Congress with bipartisan support, that would require social service agencies, those foster care facilities, to report every instance of a child going missing to law enforcement, and then on to the National Center. We know the two States that currently do that, Florida and Illinois, we received over 4,000 reports over the last year. We can intervene with law enforcement at an early stage. We can find out because they frequently run away. It is not an isolated situation. We know where they are likely to go, who they are with. And if law enforcement gets that information, they can intercept them before they are exploited. So a mandatory uniform program of reporting will be immeasurably an improvement.

Mr. ROE. Thank you for what you do. You are making a difference in this country.

I yield back.

Chairman ROKITA. The gentleman's time is expired.

I now introduce a legislator who is a dear friend to everyone on this committee, the gentlelady from New York, Representative McCarthy for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you Ranking Member Loeb sack.

Just listening to you and reading your testimony, but a few things bother me, especially on the foster children and also the children that are in the schools. My sister is a school nurse, and she does report an awful lot of things to social services. If it is not a high-level case, they can't take it. And they just let it go. This is one of the biggest complaints that I hear from her when she knows something is going on. And of course, the child does not open up. So I think that is something that we really need to look at, you know, because you are talking about social workers, which we don't have enough of them. We don't have enough school nurses to be able to have, like everybody does go to her, the children. You wear that white uniform, that is safe. So I don't know how we are going to, you know, solve that problem.

But the children with disabilities, you know, I am sitting here, they already got two strikes against them, especially those that have a hard time communicating. And that is going to be a real

problem, and that is a real problem. And I am thinking of some people my age, a little bit older, some of us have pendants, so if we fall or something, and it is kind of like a GPS, someone can respond. And I don't know what the privacy laws would be, but especially with children that can't communicate well, can like a GPS watch help them to recover?

Mr. RYAN. Absolutely, and there are some programs in place based on GPS tracking. And it is a voluntary process where the family decides to, you know, implement that device. It can be something in their school bag so it is not, you know, visible, so it is not going to be something that is going to, you know, cause any alarm, or you know, undue discussions. And some police districts have signed on to support that. So that device will only be triggered when a family member activates it. It goes directly to the police agency. We had a case here recently in Montgomery County, where actually the child of one of the Autism Speaks executives, their young boy traveled to school back and forth on a school bus. Inadvertently, he was put on the wrong school bus, gets lost in the system for many hours which is a nightmare for that child. That child had that device in his school bag. They called Montgomery County. It was activated. They found that child within 15 minutes of the activation.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. And just to follow up, the programs that you are going to be doing in the schools, are you also reaching out to the PTA so that the parents are also educated? Because one of the things that we found, especially with trying to educate parents on they should know what their children are looking on, on the Internet, there are so many good programs out there, but we are finding a lot of parents don't take advantage of that.

Mr. RYAN. You are right, Congresswoman. We provide—our Web site is our principal resource for parents in the community. But if they don't know about us, they are not going to go to us. So we have to do a better job of getting out to the communities, raising awareness of what services and resources we can provide, all of them for free. And I think, again, that is why the schools are the nexus.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Yeah.

Mr. RYAN. Because the parents are connected to the schools for a range of services and guidance. So I think if we can, you know, get our foot in the door there, we can do a better job dealing more directly with the parents.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Now, have you been doing a lot of work with some of the social workers, especially for those children that are placed into a foster home? Because you hear and you read about so many cases where these children are put into these foster homes, and they are there for a number of years, but the turnover or the runaways are extremely high. Is there any way where the social workers are actually the key to really see that this abuse is going on, but a lot of times the social worker comes in, the child is petrified, doesn't want to say anything, especially depending on the age. And then by the time they get to be a teenager, they bolt.

Mr. RYAN. That is right. We have, in connection—in addition, I should say, with the two States that are reporting, we have made outreach efforts to a number of States through social service agen-

cies and law enforcement agencies, to form partnerships and protocols of reporting. And we have had some success in the number of States where, again, social service workers are the key. They are the ones outside the classroom that have the most contact with these children. And even if they are not getting information from the child, if they know something is wrong, they are not being told something, and what is that? If they know that the National Center may be able to provide additional information, what could be happening, then we form that link that kind of closes that gap. You have social services. You have law enforcement. You have the National Center. We may know where that child is going from, because with the dialogue with the social workers, does that child have a phone? What is that phone number? We have access to all of the public databases, the social media platforms; like that mother did of that 16-year old. She looked for her daughter's phone number on Backpage. We could look up that number. We may see where that surfaces, and it may not be a good story, but we could pass that information on so there is intervention before exploitation.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Thank you for your service.

Chairman ROKITA. The gentlelady's time is expired.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania is recognized for 5 minutes, Mr. Thompson.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ryan, thank you. Thank you for being here for, you know, one of our most crucial missions, keeping our children safe. I really appreciate your work.

I was pleased to learn of your initiative Safe to Compete, which raises awareness of child athlete sexual abuse and provides training and preparedness opportunities. I am sure we can all agree that putting forth a set of best practices will ensure our children will be safer when participating in sports. Can you briefly describe what is currently being done to ensure athletes are protected and how, as policymakers, we can further assist with those efforts?

Mr. RYAN. Yes, sir. As a result of that Safe to Compete conference, where we drew together most of the Nation's largest youth sports entities and mental health professionals as well as community leaders, they signed on to what you have referred to as best practices, which includes that critical stage when an organization is taking on either a volunteer or a paid staff member who will have close contact with these children. Many of these organizations have overnight, weekend stays, even week to a month stays. So parents need to know who they are entrusting their children over to, who is literally going to be responsible for their children. These organizations now are doing background checks. They are doing criminal history checks. So they are able to detect red flags before they turn over the care and custody of these children to these, whether they be volunteers or staff members. Now, more needs to be done. And that is where I think Congress can help because we need a nationwide uniform program of background checks. The larger organizations can afford it. They can, you know, pass that on through dues or other, you know, grants that they get, but the small, local community-based organizations, and there are thousands of them, they cannot. So we need to supplement their ability

to do the same background checks because it is equally as important because there is a gap there.

And predators find the gaps. They are not going to go to an organization where they know they are going to, you know, be vetted and checked out. They will go to a small organization, because as long as they have kids, that is all they need. And if they are not going to be properly, you know, vetted, then they get in the front door, and that is where the problems are.

So we need a nationwide, uniform approach of background checks. Fingerprints have proven to be the most reliable and comprehensive. There is a cost associated with that, but there are ways to spread that cost around. We have worked with some of our partners, like LexisNexis. They have, as a result of Safe to Compete, they actually helped fund that conference, Congressman, and they offered a discount rate to community organizations to provide those necessary checks, to ensure the cost was not a prohibiting factor. So we are prepared to work with Congress. We can identify some of these corporate partners who could help defray some of these costs, but it needs to be done.

Mr. THOMPSON. Very good. Thank you.

I want to switch gears here. You do such great education, I wanted to zero in on your NetSmartz workshop. It seems like a valuable tool to students, teachers, and parents. Can you talk a little more about this program, and how will the new initiative, KidSmartz, differ from your main education program?

Mr. RYAN. Well, we are expanding—NetSmartz started out as primarily a Web-based platform where we provided the access to teachers and educators to come to our Web site, download the resources, and then utilize them in their school. Because we have grown, as I mentioned, we have our own in-house studio now. Some of them get a little carried away. They think they are like Disney animators, but they have created characters and formats, again, that are age appropriate. So you don't want to scare kids at the age of five. But yet, some of these kids have access to iPads. So you can't neglect them and say, well, wait until they get a little older. You have to approach them and address them as soon as they are starting to access these devices. So but yet the same message, the same cartoons, you know, a high school student is going to say, obviously, not for me. But they are still vulnerable. Sexting, sextortion, those are new offenses that are targeting what we call tweens. They are the ones who are socially adept at utilizing the technology, much more so than I, but yet, they don't know the real-world problems that are being facilitated through those devices. So, again, we now have the ability to target these messages, and we have the platform now, but we still need that entre. You know, I think we need a committee like this and other partners to get into this discussion because it is free. At the end of the day, it is free.

This KidSmartz program that we are going to launch in September was totally paid for by Honeywell; not a dime of taxpayer funds, and they are committed. If this is successful, as we hope it is, they are not going to just say this is a one-time release. They will stand behind it. And other partners will step up. We have been in touch with the Rotary Association. I didn't realize how strong they are, 1.2 million members, and they are all of the stakeholders

that we would hope to deal with; business leaders, educators, political leaders, you know, the schools. They are adopting now some of our challenges. They are about to take on child sex trafficking as maybe their next national campaign after polio. That is huge because they touch all of the important sectors that we need to touch, that we couldn't do without support like that.

So, again, we look forward to the partnership with this committee because you have the same charter and we can, I think, with our subject-matter expertise in this area, work well together.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you.

Chairman ROKITA. Thank you.

The gentleman's time is expired.

The gentlelady from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. FUDGE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you Mr. Ryan, for being here today.

Mr. Ryan, I represent the 11th District of Ohio, where national news was made last year when we found three young women had been held in a home for more than 10 years. But we also found that there was a great amount of change needed within our police department because their practices in some ways made the problem worse as it relates to how we search for and find missing, exploited children. How much work do you do with local police departments to prepare them to look for these young people?

Mr. RYAN. We actually worked—we worked very closely with that community. We have ongoing training. We call it the CEO training course. We bring in national law enforcement leaders to the National Center; usually a class size is about 50 to 75, and it is train the trainers. We teach them and expose them to the resources that the National Center can provide, so when they go back home to their respective agencies, they become our ambassadors. Cleveland is a good example. We held—it wasn't a CEO training course, but we held what we called a long-term missing children summit in the afternoon of the Cleveland case because there were a lot of lessons learned and takeaways.

Ms. FUDGE. Absolutely. But these police departments are not required to do it, correct? They just do it because, in Cleveland's situation, they only did it because they had to, because of the situation.

Mr. RYAN. It is voluntary.

Ms. FUDGE. What do we do to make sure that every single local police department has the proper training? Because I am telling you, that is a major part of the problem.

Mr. RYAN. I think it should be built into the training curriculum of every police academy, because it is going to become a critical part of their mission. It only takes one missing child case, and if they are not familiar with how to deal with that case, what resources are available, who to partner with, we will see what happened 10 years ago in Cleveland, where those cases, you know, fell through the cracks. So that should never happen again. We actually had the Cleveland girls at NCMEC. We had the chance to talk with them. We learn from survivors. What can they teach us? What can they teach law enforcement? Because they have a powerful story to tell.

Ms. FUDGE. Thank you.

And let me just take this one step further. Just this year, a year later, our local paper ran an editorial titled “Put a Face on Greater Cleveland’s Faceless Missing Children.” I was shocked to realize how often the descriptions of these missing kids aren’t accompanied by a photograph of some sort, and/or they are not put on police Web sites, or Web sites of nonprofits.

How do we encourage nonprofits as well as our police departments to make sure that these—the faces of these kids are on their Web sites?

Mr. RYAN. We have a photo distribution partnership with well over 1,000 corporations, including the social media platforms, Facebook, and Google. They have dedicated Web sites for missing kids, and they provide profiles of who these kids are, age-progressed photos of these children.

Ms. FUDGE. Right. I understand. I am talking about police departments and local nonprofits. I mean, because a lot of times people don’t go to those sites. If I live in Cleveland, I want to go to my Cleveland police department and see it.

Mr. RYAN. Sure.

Ms. FUDGE. But let me ask you my last question. What is the recovery rate as it relates to demographics with your agency? Certainly, at least from our experience at home, we find that minority children are not recovered nearly as quickly as nonminority children. Do you find that to be true?

Mr. RYAN. Well, we don’t keep recovery rates based on, you know, any of the demographics like race, gender. We have an overall recovery rate.

I agree with you, Congresswoman, that more needs to be done because we do know that over 50 percent of those children who go missing are from minority communities.

Ms. FUDGE. Precisely.

Mr. RYAN. They do not get the same level of media attention that is warranted. We have taken a number of steps to, you know, actually convene major networks and publications to do what we think is a more responsible effort to keeping these cases alive because it is critical because as these cases age, out of sight, out of mind, and that should never happen.

Ms. FUDGE. Thank you very much.

I yield back.

Chairman ROKITA. I thank the gentlelady.

The gentlelady from Indiana is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BROOKS. Thank you.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing.

I actually had the opportunity when I was U.S. attorney—and I now don’t recall what year—we toured your center, and learned—it was sometime between I would say 2002 and 2006 that I toured the center and was very involved in our Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force with Assistant U.S. Attorney Steve DeBrotta, who I know works a lot with the center. And my question is, how, when we have ICAC forces all around the country, as well as maybe local jurisdictions have child exploitation task forces, when kids come up in their investigations and photos, but you don’t know enough, you don’t know who the child is, or even where, you know,

the crime is taking place, how are the photos or the images of those children shared with you so you can figure out if you have information in your databases about what law enforcement is looking at?

Mr. RYAN. That is a great question. Well, the—we get our images from a number of sources. The principal one is our CyberTipline, which, again, we have received over 2.6 million reports, many of them do contain images of yet-to-be-identified children. We populate our databases with those images, and through the support of some of the technology companies, like Google, and Facebook, and Microsoft, they help us with what we call tools, visual aids that we can go through these reams of images—there are millions in number—what are the common links? Where have we seen that before? Because many times, these images are part of a series, and some of the series may be innocuous, benign images, but we have to match that up with that elicited scene of that same child and we are able to do that, but we are actually working now—the problem is this: We cannot be a State actor. If we are a State actor, then we harm law enforcement’s prosecution of these cases which we make referrals to. So we don’t accept images from law enforcement. We push out to law enforcement. Having said that, we have a fairly robust and comprehensive inventory, or library so to speak, because we are being fed by the largest ESPs.

Mrs. BROOKS. Well, that is my concern about this, is that you do have this huge database of images, and yet, it seems that law enforcement and the cases would benefit and their investigations would benefit if they were required to push the image to you, you might be able to make the match.

Mr. RYAN. Well, they have access to ours. They have access—and we coordinate through INTERPOL, so there are common databases that have access points. But again, we have to segregate what we receive from law enforcement to ensure it is not tainted for potential Fourth Amendment challenges when these cases are prosecuted.

Mrs. BROOKS. Okay, I would like to talk to you about that a bit further offline as to how we can help resolve some of this--

Mr. RYAN. Absolutely.

Mrs. BROOKS.—because I think that your center and all of these task forces, maybe we should talk about how they can work in even closer cooperation. And I know, because I work on emergency preparedness issues, that there are platforms where Red Cross and where FEMA and others monitor Twitter feeds and Facebook. Are you in a position, either working with Google, Palantir, Facebook, where you are monitoring Twitter feeds and Facebook maybe in geographic areas to try to find out what is going on in some communities?

Mr. RYAN. Well, we don’t monitor, but we do have links and both through the—all of the companies that you mentioned, they actually partner with us, provide access to their software applications and, more importantly, their audiences, in the case of Google, and Facebook. So we have an active dialogue through all of those social media applications. We don’t monitor them, per se. We encourage an active engagement, though.

Mrs. BROOKS. Are you familiar though with what I am talking about, that FEMA and Red Cross actually monitor for maybe pub-

lic health outbreaks or, you know, after emergencies, cries for help, and so forth?

Mr. RYAN. Sure. We actually partner with FEMA, because as you know, Congress has designated the National Center as a national relocation center when children go missing in a mass disaster. And so we work closely in establishing protocols with FEMA and the Red Cross in the event of a potential crisis. So we kind of piggy-back on their resources, and programs, and they bring us in when they see the need.

Mrs. BROOKS. Thanks so much for your incredible help, and I am interested in learning if there are any legal impediments that you have to work even closer with law enforcement.

Mr. RYAN. I look forward to that dialogue. Thank you.

Chairman ROKITA. The gentlelady's time has expired.

The gentleman from Kentucky is not on the subcommittee, but, without objection, I would like to recognize him for a line of questioning, if he would like, regarding this matter.

Mr. Guthrie?

Mr. GUTHRIE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it very much for allowing me to do so.

I am over on this side of the room. Good to see you again. Yeah, good to see you.

Mr. RYAN. Did somebody come in?

Mr. GUTHRIE. Yeah, somebody came. I apologize, I am not on the subcommittee, so I am down here, but I think they just had a new Member come in, so I apologize for that.

But before I get to what I was going to ask, on the question of not requiring to report, there are only two States required to report. That is reporting to law enforcement, right? They have to report that if they have somebody in their foster care who leaves their foster care, they report it to social services or somebody, I am sure, right? Or they just don't have any reporting at all?

Mr. RYAN. That may be the case. It varies by State. But I am referring specifically to reporting to law enforcement.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Okay, that is what I thought.

And I was in the Center, and I did the authorization last year and, you know, it shows that when we find common ground in the House and the Senate we can work together. Senator Leahy and I were the primary sponsors of your reauthorization, and so I came to tour the Center. And I recommend it to all my colleagues, to do that.

And the techniques that you have to go through to find, one, who the child is in the image and who the person is creating the image who we want to find is interesting, how you do that, and it is something we need to know, and it certainly is a skill and an ability. It is something needed, because there are things going on in this world most people can't even get their minds around that happens.

And the issue with me, I am from Bowling Green, Kentucky, and this always happens in the big city, you think, and so when we are home working in August, I am trying to highlight the fact this does happen everywhere, anywhere that has a computer. It is just not somebody out on the street or so forth. So we are going to try to do roundtables or conferences in different parts of my city.

What kind of things do you think, just advice for us, we should make sure people know are going on in their communities? Because you see it everywhere. You see what is happening. What kind of things do you think people don't know, in general, that they need to know about what is probably happening in their community?

Mr. RYAN. One of the most prevalent venues where these minors are being trafficked are in local hotels. Now, typically, you know, people aren't paying attention to who is coming and going in these hotels, but those who are in the business of operating hotels, they are in a position to take notice of the behavioral characteristics consistent with this trafficking.

For instance, many times, a pimp will come in with three, sometimes five young girls. The girls will be off to the corner; the pimp will go in and make the arrangements for three to five rooms, it might be for a 3-day period, typically cash. These girls will go up to their rooms. They will never leave their rooms. Food will be delivered. Nobody sees them again until they leave.

That is strange. What is going on? Why is that pimp hanging around? Why is he walking the hallways, you know, 24/7? Something is going on that is inconsistent with the regular routine of the trade of that hotel.

And I am not just talking about the very small, seedy hotel. I am talking about very well-known, you know, reputable brands.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Chain hotels. Yeah, my home is exit 22, and I-65 is, like, it is right there, and so every chain that you know that has a—

Mr. RYAN. It is every chain.

Mr. GUTHRIE.—you know, it is there.

Mr. RYAN. And what I invite people to do, and I say this with some degree of reluctance, but if you want to see the scope of the problem in your own neighborhood, go to a back page, because they promote ads in communities, in towns. It is not just cities, but they break it down, you know, into counties, into boroughs, into communities. So if they are advertising your area in an adult escort service, that means you have a problem. A child, if not multiple children, are being exploited in that area.

Mr. GUTHRIE. If I could privately reach out to you—I know Ms. Brooks is going to—and just get those ideas of what you think we should present. I didn't think about inviting hotel owners to come to a roundtable, but that sounds like—

Mr. RYAN. Also tourism.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Or a tourism group.

Mr. RYAN. You know, these young girls—there are some boys, but mostly it is young girls—they are being trafficked from State to State, so how are they getting to and from? Many times, they are flying, but then they are getting into cabs.

We have had many reports; law enforcement gets reports. They see the same young girls over the course of a month, 2 months, come through their area, go to the same hotels, go back, you know, at some point to the same.

There are a lot of eyes and ears in different sectors who, if they are properly educated, alerted, who can they call? Typically, it is going to be law enforcement. They can get to the bottom of this and do incredibly good work.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Thank you. Appreciate that.

I yield back, and thank you for the time, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROKITA. The gentleman's time has expired.

I will now recognize the gentleman from—Mr. Sablan for 5 minutes.

Mr. SABLAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And welcome, Mr. Ryan.

And while looking at this map of registered sex offenders in the Northern Marianas—I mean, throughout the country, we see—we are grateful, one, that we are included in the map, because usually the territories are, for some reason, excluded.

But I want to welcome you and tell you a little story, also, about, you know, our island and the district I come from. One morning in May of 2011, there was the tragedy of two missing sisters, actually, that fell hard upon our community. Maleina, who was 9 years old, and Faloma, who was age 10, were last seen at their bus stops as they were on their way to school. And law enforcement authorities were notified that the young girls were missing only after the sisters failed to return home from school that afternoon, and so there was that gap of time that was lost.

But I want to thank your organization, sir, in particular, Maureen Heads and Bob Hoever, for working with our office to ensure that we were included in the information in this map that we have before us.

And it has been 3 years since the girls have not been found. There have been leads, according to law enforcement officials, but the girls remain missing and there have been no arrests. And we have not forgotten, the entire Northern Marianas community have not forgotten about Maleina and Faloma, and we continue to pray for their safe return. And I hope that your organization, NCMEC, we can still find them alive and unhurt.

But under the reauthorization, the 2013 reauthorization, your organization is required to include local educational agencies, or LEAs, on information, services, programs, and resources for missing and exploited children. If we could be of any assistance to your organization in connecting you to our school officials, we would be very - more than happy to do that.

But I need to ask, if you could tell me if you have reached out to our LEAs, our public school system. And if you did, what can you share with me as a result from your coordination with them?

Mr. RYAN. Congressman, I have to look into that to see if there has been direct contact.

I know that our case managers, on the case that you reference, for instance, would be in touch with the law enforcement investigators, because one of the things we do and are doing in cases like that, we—two things to keep that case alive in, you know, the efforts of law enforcement: We do an age progression, which we do every year, and we release that and update that to law enforcement and all our poster distribution partners. So that should be going on within your respective district.

And the other thing we do is a comprehensive, what we call, actually, an anniversary campaign. So, every 2 years, we will disseminate stories about, in this case, those two young girls who went missing, again, to try to generate a lead and a tip to come

in. Because, you know, as people's memories fade, if you keep the story in front of them—

Mr. SABLAN. Yeah.

Mr. RYAN.—they may remember that one crucial piece of evidence that they may not have thought important a year or 2 ago, but now, in context, they will call.

Mr. SABLAN. Right.

Mr. RYAN. So we are doing that, I can tell you that.

Mr. SABLAN. Yeah. And the reason I am offering to help your organization hook up with our public school officials, for example, is, from just the information that we have been able to receive from those law enforcement authorities, the time since the girls were last seen at the bus stop and the time that law enforcement authorities were notified, those were, according to some people, very important, very critical time that would have been very useful in probably solving the crime. And, unfortunately, you know, the authorities were not notified until the girls didn't come home from school.

I understand that the authorities were not informed when the girls did not report to school. And I know that some of our school officials have changed the system and have updated, but we need your cooperation, sir.

Mr. RYAN. Sure.

Mr. SABLAN. And I would be willing to connect you with her if you have not made any contact or any coordination.

Mr. RYAN. We will definitely follow up, Congressman.

Mr. SABLAN. We need your assistance in getting our school officials up to date on what are the basic things or what are the important things they need to do to keep the children safe, you know, so we don't repeat this whole thing again.

My time is up, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. RYAN. Absolutely.

Chairman ROKITA. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman's time has expired. I would note for the record the gentleman is from the Northern Mariana Islands. The chair's ignorance of the two-letter postal abbreviation, that caused the confusion in introducing him.

The chair recognizes himself for 5 minutes.

Mr. Ryan, thank you again.

My blood boils, at the beginning when you gave that brief example about how a child could be delivered to a hotel room as easily as ordering a pizza. As a father of a 6-year-old and 4-year-old, you know, if I saw that gentleman, I don't know if I could contain myself. I would probably be in jail right alongside of him for battery, if not worse.

You came from the Internet business, if I looked at your bio right. You worked for AOL. This has nothing to do with AOL, but I am just trying to establish a record here. Something along the way, your career led you to this position now, after working on the Jerry Sandusky scandal, or the aftermath of it.

You mentioned at the beginning of your testimony that the world is a different place, and you immediately transitioned to the Internet. Did the Internet cause this? Did the Internet enable this? Is this world a different place because of the deterioration of society

generally? Or were these people—I am struggling for my Christianity here—have these people always been here and with us in our society?

I am not asking you—you are not a psychologist, you are not a—I want your personal opinion.

Mr. RYAN. I think the Internet clearly has opened up opportunities that did not exist that facilitates the commission of these traditional crimes. I mean, there were always predators. The modus operandi, though, has changed online.

Because when you think about it, now the Internet provides a global platform. It provides the ability for a predator to so-called groom a potential victim. Because through all the information that is imparted on different social media sites, a predator will glean that information and then turn that around and target an individual. They will know the name, the school they go to, their activities, their friends. So when they start the dialogue with a potential victim, that victim feels, oh, this is a peer, they know me, they are just like me. Their guard is down.

That is what the Internet has encouraged and enhanced. And it has made the apprehension of these predators more difficult for law enforcement, because, you know, they can operate under the radar, so to speak.

So it has caused, I use the term “explosion” of these offenses, because these predators have additional tools, they have the ability to, you know, stay undetected, and they have much more opportunity to target a larger pool of potential victims.

Chairman ROKITA. Regarding the Internet, do you have any solutions for companies, anything that you haven’t mentioned yet, short of censoring or—

Mr. RYAN. Well, a lot of companies—

Chairman ROKITA.—you know, that you want to get on record?

Mr. RYAN. Absolutely. At AOL, we employed what we called parental filters. You enable parents to restrict the level of access that children have on the Internet, and it requires a partnership.

Chairman ROKITA. What about those kids that don’t have parents, effectively, the ones that might be going to the social worker that was brought up in earlier questioning and that sort of thing?

Mr. RYAN. It enhances the problem, but, you know, whoever is entrusted with the care and guardianship of that child, whether it be a social worker or even a teacher during that school day, they have to be that responsible person who, if they are providing access to the Internet, which all schools do now, they have to take on the added responsibility to know where they are allowing that child to navigate and what tools and filters are in place.

Chairman ROKITA. Thank you.

In the time I have left, you mentioned several times the committee being well-situated, quote/unquote, to help develop the partnerships. Can you give more detail on what you mean by that?

I would just as soon you develop the partnerships. Don’t wait on this committee or Congress or anything else; go forth and do this work.

Mr. RYAN. Well, for instance, we have had the ability, in this past year alone, since we engaged and got more familiar, you know, educating this committee about our work, and, frankly, we have

learned more about your mission and charter, which has been extremely helpful. We have worked with the staff members in terms of their work to try to help identify legislative measures that could address some of the challenges that are emerging.

Just prior to this conference, this testimony, I was engaged with a very, you know, excellent dialogue with a staff member, just talking about what we are seeing, what are some of your challenges, and where that intersection may be, what fixes you are thinking about, and what is our take—a dialogue. I found that a dialogue by interested stakeholders is more likely to end up with a mutual solution, that if you don't have that dialogue, you are flying blind.

Chairman ROKITA. Okay. Thank you. My time has expired.

I will now recognize the ranking member for any closing remarks.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Well, thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just appreciate the fact that we have had you here today, Mr. Ryan. I have learned quite a lot.

I, too, would like to just associate myself with the remarks of our chair about how enraged I think we all are when we hear some of the things that we have heard today. I think that just leads us all to want to go forth and make sure we do everything we can to cooperate with you to minimize these issues that are out there, if not eliminate them entirely.

And I do agree, too, that the role of the Internet, no doubt, has been really important in magnifying the problem, multiplying the problem, perhaps, in many instances, too.

So thank you for being here today.

And I want to thank the chair again for having this hearing. Thank you.

Mr. RYAN. Thank you, sir.

Chairman ROKITA. Mr. Ryan, thank you again for being here. We really appreciate your leadership, appreciate your commitment to this country and our kids. We join you in that effort. And we look forward to continuing our relationship and that dialogue you spoke of and doing everything we can so that families can build better lives for themselves.

And, with that, seeing no further business before the subcommittee, the subcommittee stands adjourned.

Mr. RYAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Questions submitted for the record and their responses follow.]

Representative David Loebsack
Protecting America's Youth: An Update from the National Center for Missing and Exploited
Children.
July 15, 2014

To:

Mr. John D. Ryan
President and CEO
National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

1. Pursuant to the 2013 Congressional reauthorization of the federal Missing Children's Assistance Act, how is NCMEC coordinating services for homeless youth to prevent children from ending up in adverse circumstances, particularly exploitation?
2. How does NCMEC measure its own success and what have been some recent results of those measurements?

Congressman Tim Walberg (MI-07):

1. Since the September 2013 reauthorization of the *Missing Children's Assistance Act*, what specific changes has NCMEC implemented to address statutory changes? Specifically, has NCMEC applied the changes called for by my legislation which passed as part of HR 3092 that calls for increased technical assistance to law enforcement for the purpose of coordinating with states, local schools and state welfare agencies?

[Mr. Ryan's response to questions submitted for the record]



Charles B. Wang International
Children's Building
699 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3175
U.S.A.

Telephone 703.224.2150

Facsimile 703.224.2122

www.missingkids.com

www.cybertipline.com

Other Offices
California
Florida
New York
Texas

John Ryan
President and
Chief Executive Officer

August 22, 2014

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Todd Rokita
Chairman
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6100

Dear Chairman Rokita:

Thank you for the opportunity to supplement my testimony provided to the Committee on Education and the Workforce on July 15, 2014. As indicated in my testimony, the success of The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children is a direct result of Congress' steadfast commitment to NCMEC's programs of work to help protect children from abduction and exploitation and help law enforcement and families find missing children and prevent child victimization. NCMEC appreciates the Committee's continued support, and I welcome the chance to provide additional information regarding our programs. In response to the questions posed by Representatives Walberg and Loeb sack, we have prepared the responses below.

Congressman Tim Walberg (R-MI)

Since the September 2013 reauthorization of the Missing Children's Assistance Act, what specific changes has NCMEC implemented to address statutory changes? Specifically, has NCMEC applied the changes called for by my legislation which passed as part of HR 3092 that calls for increased technical assistance to law enforcement for the purpose of coordinating with states, local schools and state welfare agencies?

NCMEC continues to expand the technical assistance it provides to law enforcement agencies on missing and exploited children cases. NCMEC recently has created two new initiatives to train and assist law enforcement in addressing specific threats facing children with special needs and children who are at risk for child sex trafficking. These initiatives are designed to provide law enforcement with additional training and information that can be utilized when they are working with schools and state welfare agencies to locate and recover a missing child.

NCMEC's special needs initiative highlights the need for awareness and a rapid targeted response when a child with autism or other special needs goes missing from a residential or educational setting. NCMEC has partnered with other non-profit organizations, such as Autism Speaks and AWAARE, to co-produce public service announcements and create special search protocols and checklists for law enforcement and other first responders to use when children with autism go missing. These guidelines and resources also are available to parents, educators and other professionals at child-serving agencies so they can work together with law enforcement to understand and respond to the unique dangers presented when children with special needs wander and go missing.

In late 2013, NCMEC launched a new training program titled Child Sex Trafficking: Awareness & Response to address the increased vulnerability of homeless and runaway youth to victimization through sex trafficking. The CSTAR training program is designed to educate a range of law enforcement, state agency and educational personnel on the unique dynamics involved in identifying, recovering and providing assistance to child sex trafficking victims.

NCMEC continues to actively expand our coordination with law enforcement and state welfare agencies to provide services to children missing from state care through training, technical assistance and written agency agreements at the state and local levels. Since our re-authorization, NCMEC has signed agreements with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to facilitate the reporting of children missing from care to NCMEC and law enforcement so these children can be located and recovered quickly. These collaborative agreements help ensure that child welfare agencies receive immediate assistance from NCMEC and law enforcement in locating missing foster children and preventing exploitation to this high-risk youth population.

Congressman David Loebsack (D-IA)

Pursuant to the 2013 Congressional reauthorization of the federal Missing Children's Assistance Act, how is NCMEC coordinating services for homeless youth to prevent children from ending up in adverse circumstances, particularly exploitation?

NCMEC recognizes the increased risks homelessness can pose to a child's safety, particularly with regards to child sex trafficking. As mentioned above, in late 2013, NCMEC launched a new training program titled Child Sex Trafficking: Awareness & Response that addresses the increased vulnerability of homeless and runaway youth to victimization through sex trafficking. The CSTAR training program is designed to educate a range of child-serving professionals that work with homeless or runaway youth to identify and provide assistance to child sex trafficking victims.

NCMEC continues to build on its long-standing relationship with the National Runaway Safeline and is engaged in proactive communications with homeless shelters and nonprofit and state agencies that serve runaway and homeless youth regarding partnerships we can form to provide a fuller range of services to this at-risk population. We are aware at-risk children may come into contact with a range of service providers and social service systems and continue to work diligently to ensure all relevant child-serving agencies and organizations are aware of the resources we can provide.

NCMEC also works with key stakeholders at state agencies and shelters to help identify missing children who may pass through their facilities or be at risk of exploitation. These continued outreach efforts have led to coordination among shelter staff, NCMEC and law enforcement to marshal

resources to assist homeless and runaway children. In a recent case, NCMEC received a request for information from an employee of Connections for the Homeless in Evanston, Illinois concerning an unidentified young woman staying in the shelter. The caller thought the woman, who claimed to be an adult, was possibly a missing child. NCMEC staff searched our active missing child cases and matched the young woman to an active missing child case from Chicago, Illinois in which a 17-year-old child had run away from her caretaker. Working with the shelter and the Evanston Police Department, the child's identity was confirmed, and she was recovered.

How does NCMEC measure its own success and what have been some recent results of those measurements?

NCMEC consistently tracks its performance through internal departmental benchmarks and quarterly progress reports. NCMEC also monitors its progress through feedback from key stakeholders, including families of missing and exploited children, victims, law enforcement, and other child-serving professionals, as well as through strategic planning with NCMEC's Board of Directors. NCMEC also details our progress and program successes in our Annual Report.

NCMEC's most recent quarterly progress report highlights our measurements for January through June 2014:

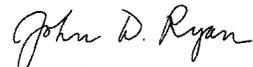
- Received 89,662 total calls for service on NCMEC's toll-free, 24/7 hotline 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678), with a cumulative program total of more than 4 million;
- Received 5,757 newly reported cases of missing children, with a cumulative program total of more than 208,000;
- Assisted in the resolution of cases involving 5,870 missing children, with a cumulative program total of more than 196,000;
- Received and made available to law enforcement 293,080 CyberTipline reports relating to potential child sexual exploitation, with a cumulative program total of more than 2.7 million reports;
- Assisted law enforcement in their efforts to identify 510 child pornography victims, through the Child Victim Identification Program, with a cumulative program total of more than 6,300;
- Hosted more than 2.4 million total visits to the NetSmartz websites, with a cumulative program total of more than 40 million visits;
- Trained 3,826 law enforcement and child-serving professionals, with a cumulative program total of more than 305,000; and
- Received 3,679 requests for assistance from NCMEC's Sex Offender Tracking Team regarding noncompliant convicted sex offenders, with a cumulative program total of more than 33,000 requests for assistance;
- Provided assistance to law enforcement during Operation Cross Country VIII in June 2014, leading to the recovery of 168 children and the arrest of 281 traffickers.

The Honorable Todd Rokita
August 22, 2014
Page | 4

As NCMEC celebrates our 30th Anniversary, we recognize that while much has been achieved with the help of NCMEC's many dedicated partners, donors, and Congressional support, much more can be done to keep our children safe. Every child deserves a safe childhood, and NCMEC is committed to working with Congress and other key stakeholders to achieve that goal.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this additional information. Please let me know if there is further information you may need.

Sincerely,



John D. Ryan
President and CEO

[Whereupon, at 11:18 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

