

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 22, 2022

Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Tom Cole
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole,

We write in support of continued funding for the National Child Abuse Hotline (Hotline) at \$2 million for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023.

The Hotline (1800-4-A-CHILD) was created in the 1980s to help educate, prevent, and intervene in child abuse situations. The Hotline offers crisis intervention, information, and referrals to thousands of emergency, social service, and support resources for at-risk children and concerned adults. It is staffed 24/7 with professional crisis counselors who provide assistance in over 170 languages and is the only major national hotline staffed by masters-level social workers specifically trained to provide crisis counseling to minors facing abuse. It receives over 115,000 contacts a year, relying on referrals from HHS, the United States Department of Justice, and their state government level counterparts.

In 2020, approximately 1,750 children died of abuse in the United States, and more than 618,000 were victims of abuse and neglect. While the number of reported incidents declined during the pandemic, this does not mean child abuse itself has decreased. Most often, abuse occurs by parents – the very people with whom children were often isolated during the pandemic. As the lockdown period began for many states, necessary health restrictions also limited regular contact with mandated reporters (such as teachers, doctors, and coaches), resulting in instances of underreporting. The confluence of events made the Hotline's work more vital than ever. During the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Hotline has seen the number of engagements grow by 13.75 percent, and the intensity of the calls, texts and chats has increased drastically as well.

Since FY18, the Appropriations bill has included for a grant to support text and chat capabilities at the Hotline. One of the goals of the expansion of the Hotline into text and chat was to reach more youth experiencing abuse. The pilot project, which ends this year, has been incredibly successful. Text and chat have more than twice the number of users reaching out for immediate crisis counseling, safety planning, and transfers to resources for help when compared to callers. The average age of a text/chat user is 15 years old, and girls make up the majority of outreach. In addition, text and chat counselors are receiving significantly more inquires dealing with sexual and emotional abuse than those received via phone.

Recognizing that the grant for the pilot project was ending, the Committee included \$2 million in ongoing support for the Hotline in FY22. This broadened support aligns with language supported on a bipartisan basis in both the House-passed and Senate-introduced Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) reauthorization bills to officially authorize the work of the Hotline across all modalities and in all age groups.

It is our hope that the Committee will continue supporting these needed interventions by again including \$2 million for ongoing support for the National Child Abuse Hotline’s phone, text, and chat capabilities. To that end, we respectfully request that the Committee include the following report language:

Child Abuse Hotline— The Committee supports ongoing efforts to address and support youth and families impacted by child abuse and neglect. To sustain these efforts, the Committee includes \$2,000,000 for a national child abuse hotline to provide resources and intervention through multiple modalities, including chat, text, and call, to youth and concerned adults facing these challenges.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,



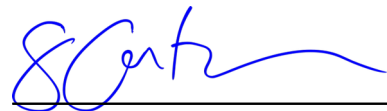
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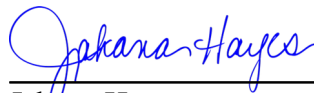
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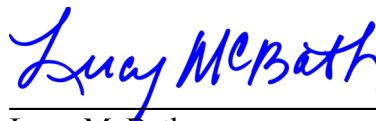
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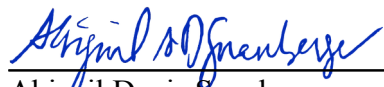
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