

March xx, 2020

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and
Science
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and
Science
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Vice Chairwoman Shaheen:

As you begin work on your Subcommittee's Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you increase the funding level for the Victims of Child Abuse Act program. Congress unanimously reauthorized the bipartisan Victims of Child Abuse Act in 2014 and reauthorized it again in 2018. The Victims of Child Abuse Act provides funding to local Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) across the country, the four Regional Children's Advocacy Centers, the National Children's Alliance, the National Children's Advocacy Center, and other essential programs serving victims of child abuse. We greatly appreciate the Subcommittee's past support for these critically important programs.

CACs are an essential law enforcement resource for local, state, and federal agencies. These community-based, public-private partnerships also bring together professionals from law enforcement, medical, mental health, child protective services, and victim advocacy agencies to pursue the truth in child abuse investigations. Each center prevents further victimization by ensuring that forensic interviews are comprehensive and meet the age-appropriate needs of the child. Communities with a CAC have demonstrated increases in successful prosecutions of perpetrators, reductions in re-abuse rates for child victims, and improvements in access to medical and mental health care for victims of child abuse. An analysis found that the use of a CAC in a child abuse case saved, on average, over \$1,000 per case.

We recognize the extremely difficult budgetary environment under which the Subcommittee continues to operate and are greatly appreciative of efforts made to ensure these programs are funded at adequate levels. The need has certainly not abated; the number of child victims served by CACs has increased from 100,539 in 2000 to more than 371,000 in 2019. Additionally, according to the Department of Health and Human Services' recent annual Child Maltreatment Report, there were about 3.5 million investigations into whether a child was a victim of abuse and neglect, and an estimated 678,000 children were found to be victims of abuse and neglect. Unfortunately, these numbers suggest a gap of hundreds of thousands of cases of suspected abuse that need a CAC forensic interview. Moreover, there are an estimated 300,000 cases of substantiated abuse with either no access to a CAC at all or an inability to use the program because nearby CACs are at capacity.

Funding for the Victims of Child Abuse Act will allow the National Children's Alliance, the Regional Children's Advocacy Centers, the National Children's Advocacy Center, and the almost 900 local CACs to continue serving child abuse victims nationwide, as well as provide

opportunities for new development in tribal communities and the 1,000 underserved counties with limited or no access to a CAC.

Thank you again for the Subcommittee's past support. We ask for your continued support of the Victims of Child Abuse Act program for Fiscal Year 2021.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,