

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 25, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Matt Cartwright
Chair
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert B. Aderholt
Ranking Member
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, Chairman Cartwright and Ranking Member Aderholt:

We write to thank the subcommittee for its continued support for the Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) by fully funding programs established by the Victims of Child Abuse Act. The Victims of Child Abuse Act authorizes funding for CACs, permits the Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to establish grants designed to improve child abuse investigation and prosecution programs, and provides grants to national organizations to better train attorneys and other individuals instrumental to prosecuting child abuse cases. All funding is competitively awarded and is the cornerstone for new CAC development and expansion, while also acting as a catalyst for other federal, state, local, and private funding sources. With this in mind, we respectfully request that you again support this critically important program and urge you to fund the program at a minimum of \$50 million in the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2023.

CACs provide an efficient, cost-effective mechanism for handling cases of severe child abuse, and are strongly supported by law enforcement, prosecutors, and the judiciary. The funding for this program goes directly to local CACs around the country in the form of grants for program support, and for training and technical assistance. Since 1992, more than 924 Local CACs, as well as 50 State Chapters, have been established in communities across the country and in more than 25 countries throughout the world. The number of children helped by CACs has almost quadrupled, growing from 100,539 in 2000 to more than 386,000 in 2021. Unfortunately, according to the Department of Health and Human Services' annual Child Maltreatment Reports, there continues to be a gap of an additional 600,000+ cases of suspected abuse that need a CAC forensic interview and aren't getting one, and an estimated 250,000 additional cases of substantiated abuse with no access to a CAC at all. And while the first year of the pandemic initially saw a drop in reports of suspected abuse by more than 50% nationwide, this was not the result of a sudden drop in cases of abuse – just in cases that were reported due to the pandemic closures and protocols. At the same time, CACs remained open and continued to see emergency cases, seeing significant increases in severe forms of abuse. For example, in

several states, the number of cases of child abuse fatalities doubled during the March/April/May 2020 time frame, over what they were during those same 3 months in 2019.

We did not believe that there was suddenly a drop in child abuse cases during this pandemic. (CACs saw a drop of more than 33,000 cases nationally in 2020.) On the contrary, we anticipated that the number of suspected cases of child abuse was likely much higher, and when schools began to reopen, and teachers (the primary reporters of suspected child abuse) had “eyes on kids”, centers saw significant increases in cases of reported abuse ranging, depending on the community, of anywhere 20% to 40/50% to 70% to double or triple the caseload level. This was at the same time that CACs were trying to also work through huge backlogs of cases that grew because of the challenges of the pandemic. And the caseloads continue to rise.

Children’s Advocacy Centers are community-based public-private partnerships that emphasize the coordination of child abuse investigations and intervention services by bringing together professionals and agencies as a multidisciplinary team. Although they receive public funds, CACs are primarily private, non-profit, 501(c) 3 organizations that are largely funded through private donations. A recent cost-benefit analysis estimates that child abuse investigations using CACs can save as much as \$1,000/child, meaning last year, CACs saved more than \$386 million nationwide.

The primary mission of a CAC is to prevent further victimization by ensuring that investigations are comprehensive and meet the age appropriate needs of the child. Communities that use CACs and multidisciplinary teams have a 94% conviction rate for CAC cases that are carried forward, and child victims of sexual abuse are four times more likely to receive forensic medical exams and increased referrals for mental health treatment than children served by non-CAC communities. Children’s Advocacy Centers can be found in every type of community from urban, suburban, and rural communities to Native American tribes. CACs provide services to children from birth to age 18, with nearly 40% of the children served being younger than 6 years old. As important as intervention is to alleviating the suffering of these children, efforts to prevent child sexual abuse in the first place is equally important. Last year, CACs provided child sexual abuse prevention training to more millions of individuals, many in a school setting.

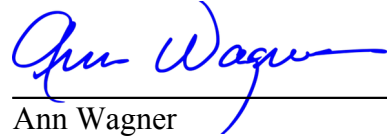
We understand that this is again an extremely difficult budget year and want to thank the subcommittee for consistently funding programs established by the Victims of Child Abuse Act. We are confident that funding programs at \$50 million in FY23 will reflect increased community needs, allow CACs to continue serving child abuse victims nationwide, and provide opportunities for children to begin healing and move forward with their lives.

Thank you for your leadership in this critical area and for your consideration of this request.

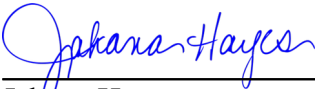
Sincerely,



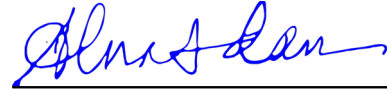
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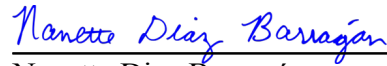
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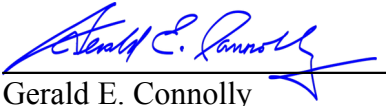
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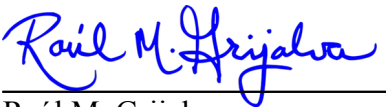
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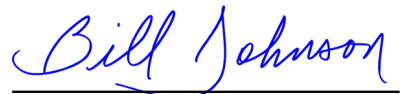
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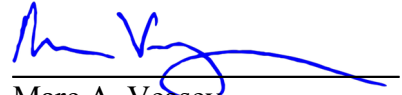
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Mark Takano

MARK TAKANO
Member of Congress



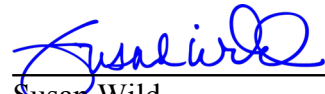
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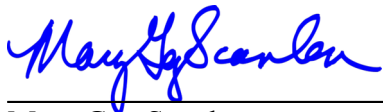
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