

March 30, 2022

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard, Chairwoman  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann, Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Chris Murphy, Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Shelly Moore Capito, Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

Dear Chairwoman Roybal-Allard and Chairman Murphy and Ranking Members Fleischmann and Capito,

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to respectfully request robust funding increases for fiscal year 2023 for the following Homeland Security accounts that assist in combating Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children (OSEAC). The [US Sentencing Commission's October 2021 report](#), which studied child sexual abuse image producers, found that the number of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) producers sentenced between 2005 and 2019 increased by 422%. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the preexisting OSEAC crisis, with societal changes caused by pandemic restrictions and increased internet usage significantly impacting children in many ways, including:

- **Transformations in Education:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, children [spent more time online in 2022](#) - both unsupervised and during traditional school hours. As a result, children have become more vulnerable to exploitative and potentially violent interactions with cybercriminals.
- **Online Predation:** Researchers have observed a [“three-fold” increase](#) in self-generated imagery depicting 7 to 10-year-olds, as they were increasingly targeted and groomed by internet predators on an industrial scale.
- **Cyber Exploitation:** In 2021, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) received more than [29.3 million CyberTipline reports containing over 84.9 million images](#), videos, and other content related to suspected child sexual exploitation.
- **Reduced Perceptions of Child Safety:** Some [80% of children in 25 countries](#) report feeling in danger of sexual abuse or exploitation online. For a child victim, this may result in social isolation, mental health issues, substance abuse, self-harm or suicide, as well as an increased likelihood of exhibiting abusive behaviors themselves in adulthood.
- **Abuse of Digital Technologies:** As faster broadband connections, mobile devices, and social media platforms have become more widely accessible, the production and dissemination of child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) has increased in volume, providing offenders with additional technical possibilities to produce and share CSAM content.

The methods and platforms that offenders use to exploit and abuse children are constantly

evolving and adapting, forcing law enforcement, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations to frequently change tactics and tools in response.

However, with limited resources, United States law enforcement agencies are increasingly unable to respond to the rapidly growing number of [CyberTips](#) and proactively work cases of child sexual exploitation. In other cases, state and local law enforcement may not possess the required technical skill to properly investigate suspected child sexual abuse material.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is a critical partner in the fight against digital and physical child sexual exploitation, with expertise in forensic analysis, offender apprehension, and victim identification, and a host of other activities. Outlined below, we request increased funding to the following OSEAC-related DHS accounts. This funding can help to close the aforementioned gaps and protect children from cybercrimes.

<b>ICE Operations and Support FY 2023 Recommendations and Past Appropriations</b>			
	<b>FY22 Appropriation</b>	<b>FY23 Presidential Budget Request</b>	<b>FY23 Recommendation</b>
<b>Homeland Security Investigations - Domestic Investigations</b>			
Child Exploitation Investigations Unit (within C3) - under Domestic Investigations	27,500,000	n/a	30,000,000
Cyber Crimes Center (C3) - under Domestic Investigations	n/a	n/a	Robust increases
<b>Child Exploitation Investigations</b>			

Child Exploitation Investigations	n/a	n/a	100,000,000 in new spending
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**Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) including new funding for Child Exploitation Investigations**

*Child exploitation investigations - Additional \$100 million*

We request an additional \$100 million be allocated to Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) specifically for child exploitation investigations on top of the existing budget allocations for HSI operations. Current allocations for investigations are inadequate to respond to the exponential growth in OSEAC. Despite the number of CyberTipline reports to NCMEC increasing year upon year, the number of federal prosecutions between 2016 and 2020 for OSEAC declined. The sheer volume of reports and limited staffing in combination with the high level of specialized expertise, cyber skills, and continual training on technological advances necessary to thoroughly investigate these crimes severely constrains current efforts. Additional funding specifically for child exploitation investigations would increase HSI’s capacity to interdict child sexual abuse image offenders and identify children seen in these images who remain unidentified and remove them from exploitation.

Report language: *The Committee is concerned by the exponential growth of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children over the past decade. The Committee recommends funding of no less than \$100 million in new spending for child exploitation investigations conducted by the Department of Homeland Security’s Homeland Security Investigations. The Committee recognizes the critical role the Department of Homeland Security’s Homeland Security Investigations play in the identification of child victims of online sexual exploitation and abuse and their removal from harmful situations, as well as in the identification and prosecution of offenders. The Committee encourages the Secretary of Homeland Security to authorize an increased rate of basic pay for employees within the Department of Homeland Security that hold a position that requires significant cyber skills and supports the investigation and prosecution of technology-facilitated crimes against children and aids in the protection of child exploitation victims.*

*HSI Cyber Crimes Center – Robust increases*

We request robust increases for HSI’s Cyber Crimes Center. The Cyber Crime Center (C3) includes the Child Exploitation Investigations Unit and the Computer Forensics Unit, as well as the Child Victim Identification Program which analyzes child sexual abuse materials in an effort to identify and rescue children seen in sexually abusive imagery. Additional funding for the Cyber Crimes Center would support the expansion of large scale international CSAM investigations, which historically have interdicted some of the most violent child sex abusers around the globe, some of whom order the live-streaming sexual abuse of children as young as

infants and toddlers. C3 also runs the HERO Child Rescue Corps and provides state and local forensic assistance to law enforcement agencies across the US with advanced forensic retrieval techniques. The Cyber Crimes Center works closely with the National Center on Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Forces to support online sexual exploitation and abuse of children investigations. Digital evidence plays a critical role in the identification of child victims and offenders, in addition to supporting criminal prosecutions. With digital technologies and encryption becoming more sophisticated and the number of CyberTips growing exponentially, it is critical for all units of the Cyber Crime Center to receive robust funding to continue developing new tools and techniques to gather digital evidence.

*Child Exploitation Investigations Unit (CEIU) – \$30 million*

We request \$30 million for the Child Exploitation Investigations Unit (CEIU). The CEIU specifically focuses on investigations related to the sexual exploitation of children, including the production and distribution of child sexual abuse materials. CEIU's initiatives include: Operation Predator, which targets offenders, including those that produce child sexual abuse materials; the Virtual Global Taskforce, which supports collaboration between domestic and international law enforcement agencies and private sector partners against online sexual exploitation and abuse; the National Child Victim Identification System, which supports law enforcement's ability to identify victims of sexual exploitation; and the Victim Identification Program, which supports the rescue of children who are depicted in child sexual abuse material. Additional funding would allow for the CEIU to increase the number of investigations it is able to support. It would also expand the above-mentioned programs, resulting in additional victims of online sexual exploitation of children being identified and removed from harmful situations.

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The Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs subcommittee has a long-standing record of supporting investments that protect children and youth from the lifelong trauma of OSEAC. Increased U.S. government funding for these accounts will send a strong signal that the U.S. prioritizes the health, protection, and safety of *all* children, whether interacting in the digital or physical world.

Sincerely,

ChildFund International  
ECPAT-USA  
International Justice Mission  
Keep Kids Safe  
Lynn's Warriors  
National Children's Alliance  
The National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College  
ParentsTogether  
Protect Young Eyes  
Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)  
Thorn

UNICEF USA