



**United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary
Subcommittee on Crime and Counterterrorism**

**“Lost and Exploited: Confronting Child Trafficking and the Failure
to Protect America’s Most Vulnerable”**

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I. Background

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) is a private, nonprofit organization created in response to an unthinkable tragedy. In 1981, 6-year-old Adam Walsh was with his mother in a Florida shopping mall when he vanished without a trace. Adam’s parents, Revé and John Walsh, endured 10 excruciating days searching for Adam before he was found murdered 100 miles away. The Walshes channeled their grief and came together with other child advocates to create NCMEC in 1984. Over the past 42 years, NCMEC has grown into the nation’s largest and most influential child protection organization. Today NCMEC fulfills its Congressionally-designated mission to help find missing children, combat child sexual exploitation, and prevent child victimization through five core programs of work relating to: (1) missing children; (2) exploited children; (3) community outreach; (4) educational and professional resources; and (5) family support.

Congress has designated NCMEC to support law enforcement efforts to locate, identify, and recover children victimized by sex trafficking¹ and to identify victims depicted in child sexual abuse material (CSAM).² In fulfilling this work, NCMEC is at the forefront of responding to cases of child sex trafficking and victim identification and fervently works to combat these threats to children online.

Online crimes involving child sex trafficking and the online dissemination of CSAM are pervasive, complex, and multifaceted and require a multidisciplinary response. Law enforcement, prosecutors, legislators, service providers, and non-profits must work collaboratively to combat these crimes and protect children from this horrific exploitation. The anonymity of the internet; efforts by traffickers and offenders to conceal the identity of child victims; technological challenges to identify and locate child victims; and inadequate reporting by online platforms of details relating to these crimes complicates how we as a nation address these crimes. To prioritize identifying and recovering child victims, NCMEC works with all stakeholders, including international, federal, state and local law enforcement, to fulfill our role as the national clearinghouse on missing and exploited children issues.

¹ See 34 U.S.C. §11293(b)(1)(K)(i)(I)(cc) and (b)(1)(P).

² See 34 U.S.C. §11293(b)(1)(K)(ii).

II. Online Sex Trafficking of Children in America Today

A. Background to the Problem

Child sex trafficking is a form of child abuse that occurs when a child under 18 is advertised, solicited, or exploited through a commercial sex act in exchange for money, food, shelter, drugs, or anything of value. Children can be victimized through sex trafficking in a variety of ways, including non-familial trafficking involving pimps, romantic partners, or gang members; familial trafficking where children are victimized by their parent or another family member while living at home; and children who have run from home or the care of child welfare and are targeted by traffickers and buyers who prey on the child's need for love, acceptance, food, and shelter. Children who lack strong support networks or experience trauma, homelessness, or bullying are at increased risk for sex trafficking. Child sex trafficking can have devastating immediate and long-term consequences, including impacts on a child's health, psychological and physical trauma, and even death. Behind every report NCMEC receives is a child demonstrating incredible resilience while facing unimaginable horrors.

Today, child sex trafficking is a technology-facilitated crime. Emerging technologies have enabled traffickers and buyers to entice, control, advertise, sell, and purchase children for sex online. While technology facilitates the online exploitation of children, including through sex trafficking, NCMEC leverages technology to help recover trafficked children and to support NCMEC's life-saving child protection mission. NCMEC utilizes a range of technologies, including specially tailored anti-trafficking tools, publicly available data tools, and emerging technologies based on artificial intelligence, image matching, and sophisticated mapping techniques to combat child exploitation. Technology is a crucial force multiplier to help us surface potential leads from large volumes of data, enabling NCMEC to more quickly and efficiently ensure that the most comprehensive information possible is provided to law enforcement to recover a child.

B. NCMEC's Efforts to Identify Victims and Combat Child Sex Trafficking

In its role as the national clearinghouse for reports relating to both missing and exploited children, NCMEC is uniquely situated to identify and respond to child sex trafficking cases. Every day, NCMEC utilizes unique analytical tools to help identify and locate missing children who are trafficked and trafficked children reported to NCMEC from online content; train law enforcement and child-serving professionals on indicators of child sex trafficking and NCMEC resources; and provide family/peer support and recovery services. We have responded to reports of child sex trafficking from all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico and from urban, suburban, rural, and tribal communities. Our work to combat child sex trafficking is informed by collaborating with a broad group of consultants with lived experience relating to trafficking and child sexual exploitation.

1. Child Sex Trafficking Reports Submitted to NCMEC's CyberTipline

For close to 30 years, NCMEC has operated the CyberTipline, the centralized online mechanism for members of the public and online platforms to report incidents of suspected child sexual exploitation, including the distribution and re-distribution of CSAM and child sex trafficking. Online platforms are statutorily required to submit a report to NCMEC's CyberTipline when they have actual knowledge

of an apparent violation of these federal crimes. While the reporting requirement mandates submission of reports to the CyberTipline, it does not require online platforms to take proactive steps to detect child sexual exploitation, remove content after it has been reported, or submit timely, substantive, consistent information to the CyberTipline.

Since the CyberTipline was created, NCMEC has responded to more than 226 million reports relating to child sexual exploitation, including more than 305,500 reports relating to child sex trafficking. In 2025, NCMEC received more than 21.3 million reports that included more than 61.8 million images, videos, and other content relating to child sexual exploitation. Based on this volume of reports and cases, NCMEC has a unique vantage point to identify, react, and alert law enforcement and the public to emerging exploitation trends. NCMEC's CyberTipline is the largest source of leads relating to child sexual exploitation for both U.S. and international law enforcement agencies.

While the sex trafficking of children online is not a new crime, the mandated reporting required by the REPORT Act,³ for the first time is exposing the pervasiveness of this crime across online platforms. For years NCMEC had alerted law enforcement, online platforms, and members of the public to traffickers' and buyers' overt use of the internet to target, groom, buy, and sell children for sex. Because online platforms were not required to report child sex trafficking prior to the REPORT Act, and so few reported voluntarily, NCMEC had not seen the volume of reports we knew reflected the true magnitude of child sex trafficking online. As a direct result of the REPORT Act, NCMEC is starting to see a more realistic reflection of the volume of children being trafficked for sex online. In 2023, one year before the REPORT Act was enacted, online platforms submitted 8,480 CyberTipline reports relating to child sex trafficking. In 2025 (the first full year after the REPORT Act was enacted), online platforms submitted 105,877 CyberTipline reports relating to child sex trafficking. This astounding 1,149% increase⁴ in child sex trafficking reports is a testament to the power of federal legislation to illuminate online dangers to children and create a pathway for victimized children to be identified, rescued, and provided with recovery services.

2. Missing Child Cases Involving Sex Trafficking Victimization

In addition to being Congressionally designated to operate the CyberTipline, NCMEC is also designated by Congress as the national resource center and information clearinghouse for missing children.⁵ Of the more than 32,000 missing children reported to NCMEC in 2025, 1 in 7 were likely victims of child sex trafficking, and the average age of a child victim was 15 years old. Many children who run from their family home or the care of child welfare are uniquely vulnerable to being victimized through sex trafficking. Over the past four decades, NCMEC has identified trends indicating that children who run away frequently or for long periods of time tend to be running from an unsafe situation to an unsafe situation or both. These vulnerable children are often mislabeled as a "runaway," a term that places stigma and blame on a child and significantly impacts the prioritization

³ The REPORT Act was introduced by Senator Blackburn and Senator Ossoff and championed and passed by the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2023 and enacted in May 2024. This new law for the first time mandated online platforms to report child sex trafficking to NCMEC's CyberTipline when they become aware of such incidents. Prior to the REPORT Act, the reporting of child sex trafficking by online platforms was voluntary and often inadequate.

⁴ Between 2024 and 2025, child sex trafficking reports submitted to NCMEC's CyberTipline increased by 323%.

⁵ See 34 U.S.C. §11293(b)(1)(B).

and urgency of response. NCMEC works to combat these stereotypes by providing case-based consultations with law enforcement, child welfare professionals, and parents.

Children missing from child welfare facilities are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking. Last year, approximately 17% of children missing from child welfare care were likely exploited through sex trafficking. Many children enter care due to prior abuse or neglect and carry complex trauma histories. They may experience placement instability, feelings of rejection, difficulty forming secure attachments, and a deep need for belonging. These factors make them especially susceptible to traffickers who intentionally offer the illusion of love, belonging, and family as a recruitment strategy. This creates a dangerous convergence of factors: prior trauma, a profound need for connection, instability in caregiving environments, and diminished urgency when a child is labeled as a “runaway.” When recovery efforts are under-resourced, delayed or deprioritized, traffickers and buyers face lower risk and child sexual exploitation becomes easier and more profitable for criminals.

It is a national crisis when children feel that being on the streets or with a trafficker is a better place for them than their foster care placement. Today, NCMEC is responding to 5,832 active cases of missing children in America. While not every missing child will experience sex trafficking, each day a child is missing they are at an increased risk for a number of adverse outcomes, including pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, mental health conditions, substance abuse, self-harm, and suicide attempts that can have a lasting impact on their physical and mental health and their future wellbeing.

3. Increased Connection Between CSAM and Child Sex Trafficking

As noted above, child sex trafficking occurs when a child under the age of 18 is advertised, solicited, or exploited through a commercial sex act. CSAM involves the visual depiction of a child under the age of 18 in sexually explicit conduct. While these are distinct crimes that can involve different enticement/grooming tactics, mechanisms of control, and use of technology, at times these crimes are inextricable. As a result of increased reporting of child sex trafficking to NCMEC following the REPORT Act, NCMEC is validating new trends in how children are exploited for sex online. One especially alarming new trend we have identified is the increasingly nuanced line between crimes involving CSAM and crimes involving the sex trafficking of a child. NCMEC has seen an increase in cases where an adult man will directly approach a child online and offer to pay the child to produce and send them CSAM as a “preview.” The adult will then aggressively attempt to set up an in-person meeting to pay the child for sex acts. This trend demonstrates the increasingly porous nature of child sexual exploitation and the prevalence of offenders using CSAM to control and manipulate a child and to distribute imagery of a child’s abuse online.

Another alarming trend demonstrating the blurred lines between CSAM and child sex trafficking occurs in familial sex trafficking. NCMEC commonly sees traffickers and buyers involved in familiar trafficking produce CSAM. For the trafficker, creating CSAM creates an additional revenue stream while also increasing control over the victim. For the buyer, it provides a record of the sexual abuse of the child that can be viewed later or traded within their offender network. For the survivor, it creates additional fear and distress, even years after the CSAM was produced.

C. NCMEC’s High-Impact Programs to Identify Children of Sexual Exploitation

NCMEC consistently focuses on identifying and locating children who are sexually exploited regardless of whether we are responding to a CyberTipline report or a report of a missing child who is being trafficked for sex. Our goal is to identify and locate the child victim and make sure the report is provided to the international, federal, state, or local law enforcement agency best situated to investigate that case and recover the child from their victimization. NCMEC employs several different techniques, technologies, and processes to achieve this central goal.

1. NCMEC’s Child Victim Identification Program to Identify and Locate Children Victimized by the Distribution and Re-Distribution of CSAM

In addition to operating the CyberTipline to analyze reports relating to child sexual exploitation, NCMEC is proud of its decades-long history of successful victim identification and ongoing survivor support. Congress has recognized NCMEC’s unique role in child victim identification by authorizing us to run the Child Victim Identification Program (“CVIP”). NCMEC created CVIP in 2002, after repeatedly seeing images of the same children distributed online and submitted in CyberTipline reports, prompting us to create a system to track identified and unidentified children depicted in sexual abusive imagery. Today CVIP has a global reach and extensive wrap-around services for law enforcement and child victims. Law enforcement submits CSAM-related content seized from offenders to CVIP, and NCMEC can determine if the seized files depict identified or unidentified child victims. If unidentified, we will apply our extensive analytical tools to help locate and identify the child. CVIP’s primary goals are to: (1) help identify and locate unidentified child victims depicted in CSAM; (2) help verify if CSAM seized from offenders depicts previously identified child victims; and (3) provide recovery and restitution support to children and their families.⁶⁷

While U.S law does not require law enforcement to submit content to CVIP, thousands of international, federal, state, and military law enforcement currently submit content to NCMEC’s CVIP to expand global efforts to identify and locate child victims from recirculated images of their sexual abuse. NCMEC works closely with the Department of Homeland Security- Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the FBI, the Internet Crimes Against Children task forces, INTERPOL, and the global victim identification community on a daily basis to triage CVIP submissions, reviews, and analyses to help identify unknown child victims depicted in CSAM.

The internet enables offenders from different countries to victimize children and distribute and recirculate CSAM without regard to geographic borders. To combat this disturbing aspect of online child sexual exploitation, NCMEC ensures CVIP receives and analyzes CSAM submitted by law enforcement agencies from around the world. This global approach has resulted in hundreds of child victims being identified, located, and removed from exploitation as a direct result of submissions from international law enforcement agencies. Since 2020, NCMEC has tracked more than 2,500 cases of exploitation from internationally submitted imagery, and nearly 700 children have been identified

⁷ NCMEC’s operation of CVIP also serves as the foundation for the Department of Justice Child Exploitation Notification Program to notify identified victims (or their designated representative) that CSAM in which they were depicted has been circulated in a federal case, and they may be eligible to pursue criminal and/or civil restitution against an offender.

from these cases. NCMEC also regularly conducts CSAM comparisons and deconflictions through the Interpol Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) Database and promotes ICSE as a valuable resource for law enforcement to collaborate globally to identify children depicted in CSAM. NCMEC's proactive victim identification efforts are often the beginning of global law enforcement investigations to locate and recover children. In 2025, NCMEC began tracking more than 11,000 new cases of child sexual exploitation and using available clues and information, we were able to refer more than 9,400 cases to law enforcement for victim identification, including over 5,800 cases that we referred internationally to more than 135 countries.

NCMEC's collaboration with law enforcement to support identification of child victims is life-saving. The following are just a few examples highlighting how NCMEC's work to support child identification has led to law enforcement's recovery of a child from ongoing sexual exploitation:

- In February 2026, NCMEC received a CyberTipline report with images depicting the sexual abuse of an infant boy. NCMEC's victim identification team immediately reviewed the imagery and through available information determined the images appeared to be newly produced. Using information from the imagery metadata, NCMEC was able to quickly determine a possible residence where the images had been created in Louisiana. Within just 5 hours of referring this information to the Louisiana Department of Justice (LA ICAC), the infant victim was identified, and the offender was arrested.
- In September 2025, NCMEC became aware of a new case of sexual exploitation of a young boy who appeared to have been enticed online. NCMEC conducted visually reviewed the reported exploitation images and located a sports uniform with a logo. Through extensive open-source queries, NCMEC was able to identify a middle school in Oklahoma and a possible name for the child. Within hours of making a referral to the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OK ICAC), the child, who was 14-15 years old at the time of his exploitation, was identified and safeguarded by local law enforcement in Oklahoma.
- In September 2025, NCMEC became aware of a new case of sexual exploitation of a young girl who appeared to have been enticed online. NCMEC conducted visual review of the images depicting the exploitation and located a t-shirt with a possible company logo and phone number. Using this information, NCMEC was able to locate a webpage for the company, a potential location, and various social media profiles that appeared related. Through extensive analysis of these sites, the child victim was believed to be in Pennsylvania. After making a referral to the Pennsylvania ICAC, NCMEC received information within weeks that the child had been identified and safeguarded by law enforcement.

As of March 1, 2026, NCMEC has received and analyzed over 465 million images and videos submitted by law enforcement relating to children being sexually exploited online. NCMEC's efforts through CVIP and coordination with law enforcement on victim identification have resulted in law enforcement successfully identifying more than 36,000 children depicted in sexually abusive images. Many CSAM images and videos are redistributed online at disturbingly high rates as increasing numbers of offenders around the world seek out and trade a victim's imagery year after year. In ten cases of the most frequently distributed imagery, NCMEC has seen children's images on average over

890,000 times; in three of these cases, imagery has been seen over 1 million times. NCMEC is aware of over 55 cases involving more than 110 child victims where sexual abuse imagery has been seen in over 10,000 offender collections submitted to NCMEC's CVIP. In one instance, NCMEC has seen images of the sexual abuse of a young girl from the ages of 5 to 9 years old over 1.4 million times in content seized from offenders by law enforcement.

Survivors suffer severe harm, psychological impact, and physical safety concerns from the continued recirculation of CSAM in which they are depicted as communities of offenders communicate online to redistribute CSAM and track, harass, and share personal information relating to child victims even after their physical abuse has ended. Tragically, for many victims, this torture is never-ending.

2. NCMEC's Support for Law Enforcement Through Analysis of Seized CSAM-Related Content Submitted to NCMEC's CVIP

Each week, approximately 200 law enforcement officers submit content seized from offenders to NCMEC's CVIP and request our analytical assistance with victim identification. This number of submissions is expected to rise dramatically with additional improvements to child protection from the REPORT Act. In addition to requiring online platforms to report child sex trafficking to NCMEC's CyberTipline, the REPORT Act also enabled NCMEC to utilize cloud storage for CSAM imagery and institute the secure electronic transfer of seized CSAM from law enforcement to CVIP.⁸ Prior to February 2026, law enforcement had no choice but to engage in a time consuming and costly process to copy seized content to a hard drive or thumb drive and mail this physical media to federal liaisons working at NCMEC's headquarters. The time and financial burdens associated with this process prevented many law enforcement agencies from submitting content to CVIP, resulting in limited victim identification support and Department of Justice notification that could result in restitution opportunities for a child victim. On January 29, 2026, as a result of passage of the REPORT Act, NCMEC officially launched its Electronic File Submission (EFS) tool that enables all international, federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to electronically submit CSAM-related content seized from offenders to CVIP for our analysis and support. Since the EFS tool was made available to law enforcement, NCMEC has received over 820 electronic submissions from law enforcement agencies, containing more than 645,000 files. This new process will greatly accelerate victim identification efforts and expedite prosecutions of offenders who possess and trade CSAM.

In addition to facilitating analysis of CSAM submitted to CVIP, NCMEC provides additional support to law enforcement. First, NCMEC provides reports on whether child victims depicted in images or videos from a seized offender's collection have been identified or are unidentified. These reports also serve as a pointer system by including contact information for the relevant investigating agency in the United States and globally. NCMEC also provided these reports to the Child Exploitation Notification Program, which is part of the FBI's Victim Services Division. This program is responsible for notifying CSAM victims who have indicated they want to be notified each time CSAM in which they are depicted is found in possession of a defendant who has been charged federally. This additional function facilitates fulfilling requirements under the Victims' Rights and Restitution Act (34 U.S.C. §20141) and the Crime Victims' Rights Act (18 U.S.C. §3771). NCMEC also provides

⁸ NCMEC supports the Safe Cloud Storage Act (sponsored by Senator Blackburn and Senator Klobuchar and supported by many members of this Subcommittee), which would enable law enforcement agencies to use cloud storage for CSAM.

“Seen Before Reports” to law enforcement who recently have identified a new victim of CSAM. These reports help law enforcement to quantify the volume of distribution and can be used in a prosecution of a defendant for distribution of CSAM.

Following recovery, NCMEC continues to actively support survivors depicted in CSAM with therapeutic and mental health resources and attorney referrals to assist with pursuing restitution and other legal issues.

3. NCMEC’s Identification and Location of Children Victimized by Sex Trafficking

For every missing child case and CyberTipline report indicating a child is being trafficked, there are hundreds of data points NCMEC can use to help locate the child and support law enforcement recovery efforts. Every day, NCMEC analyzes information provided by a child’s parent/guardian, social worker or law enforcement; developed through review of a child’s public social media and other online presence; or received from a lead called into NCMEC’s Call Center by a member of the public. NCMEC actively screens every missing child case reported to us for indicators of child sex trafficking⁹ using a risk assessment tool we developed based on our decades of data collected relating to child sex trafficking cases combined with subject matter expertise and input from survivors.

Individually, each piece of information relating to a child may not raise specific concerns or provide clear information about a child victim’s identity or location. NCMEC focuses on quickly combining disparate information and data points to create a clearer picture of a child’s identity, location, and victimization. This is especially critical when a child is being exploited through sex trafficking. Traffickers actively work to evade detection by obscuring their identity, frequently moving a child across state lines, using multiple phone numbers including burner phones, changing a child’s appearance, altering online ads to evade detection, and limiting exposure of a child’s face or other identifying characteristics in photos posted in online trafficking ads. NCMEC leverages advanced artificial intelligence systems combined with natural language processing to interpret nuances and connect data and patterns from case material in seconds. This technology provides NCMEC with a real-time stream of information being developed in a missing child case.

As the volume of reports continues to rise dramatically and available data expands exponentially, NCMEC’s expertise of trends and patterns relating to online child sex trafficking continues to expand, our use of technology to quickly and efficiently identify child victims and rapidly develop information regarding their possible location has never been more important. The data available in an average case is immensely valuable – but only if we can connect the right data points, surface connections between children and offenders, identify obscure patterns within case files, and amplify NCMEC’s data by combining it with publicly available open-source information and unique anti-trafficking technology tools.

⁹ Since 2020, NCMEC has used donated technology to compare data from NCMEC’s missing child posters to online escort ads. The results have been extraordinary. Over the past 6 years, 3,333 positive matches have identified a missing child depicted in an online escort ad. Many of these matches include missing children reported to NCMEC with no indicators of sex trafficking. The youngest child identified as a victim of sex trafficking through this process was only 12 years old. NCMEC currently runs all our active missing cases through this technology on a weekly basis.

NCMEC also utilizes targeted publicly available data, including license plate recognition and mapping technology to help identify offenders who may be connected to a missing or exploited child. While this technology is incredibly valuable to identify and connect data points quickly, analytical human evaluation and expertise is needed to facilitate these technology tools, review results, and ensure that nuanced patterns are appropriately reviewed. As part of NCMEC's mission, we also contribute our analytical resources to support critical law enforcement operations to identify and recover child victims. In 2025, NCMEC supported 36 national, state, and local anti-trafficking operations. Our support included providing advanced analytical information on missing children and leads related to their possible location based on our mapping technology and analytical expertise. NCMEC's support of these operations has resulted in law enforcement's successful recovery of hundreds of children who were being actively exploited through sex trafficking.

Through our decades of integrating survivor expertise into our work, NCMEC has learned that recovery alone is not sufficient. While locating a child is a crucial first step and immediate priority, recovery marks the beginning, not the end, of the healing process. For survivors, the moment of recovery is often a terrifying first step towards overcoming challenges and addressing the trauma caused by sex trafficking victimization. NCMEC works directly with child welfare professionals to provide individualized case support for a child's successful post-recovery placement and support. We also support resource coordination by connecting case workers with specialized, community-based providers to help meet the complex needs of child sex trafficking survivors. NCMEC recognizes that appropriate recovery planning is an unparalleled opportunity to begin disrupting a child's cycle of exploitation through intentional, planned, trauma-informed, and victim-centered engagement.

D. NCMEC's Unique Support to Child Victims to Help Remove CSAM After a Child is Identified and Recovered

In most instances after a child is identified and recovered, survivors inform NCMEC that a primary goal of their recovery is to ensure that imagery depicting their abuse is taken down. The frequency with which CSAM and related sexually exploitative images and videos continue to circulate online is deeply concerning. NCMEC operates several programs to support child victims in removing images depicting their sexual exploitation from online sites.

NCMEC operates a notice and takedown program that notifies online platforms when a survivor has informed NCMEC that imagery depicting their abuse is posted online or when NCMEC receives a report of apparent CSAM hosted on a public website. In 2025, NCMEC alerted more than 875 online platforms to apparent child sexual exploitation content by sending out more than 170,000 notices. More than 45% of online platforms that received notices from NCMEC did not remove all reported content within the 12-day period NCMEC monitors for removal. While some platforms removed content within 1 hour of receiving NCMEC's notice, more than half took up to 12 days to partially remove content, and some platforms never responded at all. This disparity underscores that online platforms will not act consistently to remove child sexual exploitation content without a legal requirement to do so.

In one instance a survivor of child sex trafficking reached out to NCMEC for help removing four sexually explicit images that were posted online. Despite being part of a successful federal

prosecution against her trafficker, these images continued to be recirculated causing significant psychological impact and concern for her physical safety. NCMEC used our resources to detect 288 additional instances in which the images had been reposted and shared and issued notices to five online platforms to remove the images, resulting in all of the images being removed. When NCMEC notified the survivor of this successful outcome she burst into tears saying, “my trafficking ended over 4 years ago but today I finally feel free.”

NCMEC also operates a Take It Down program that enables a child to transmit to NCMEC hashes of nude, partially nude, and sexually explicit photos and videos in which they are depicted and which they believe are or may be shared online. NCMEC compiles these hashes and shares the list with online platforms that have agreed to use the hashes to detect, report, and remove the images if shared on their services. As with NCMEC’s notice and takedown program, the Take It Down program is a voluntary initiative that does not require online platforms to take action.

The TAKE IT DOWN Act enacted in May 2025,¹⁰ requires online platforms to create a process by May 2026, to enable victims and authorized individuals to report real or AI-modified sexually abusive images and request removal of the imagery. This is the first notice and removal process relating to child sexual exploitation that has the power of the federal law behind it and provides much-needed hope for victims. NCMEC also supports the STOP CSAM Act’s¹¹ increased reporting requirements for online platforms reporting child sexual exploitation to the CyberTipline. Mandatory reporting of timely, consistent, substantive information – especially relating to the identity and location of child victims – would enable law enforcement to more quickly locate and safeguard children from ongoing exploitation.

III. Conclusion

NCMEC anticipates that reports of online child sex trafficking will continue to increase, the line between coerced production of CSAM and trafficking will become increasingly blurred, and the identification of child victims of online exploitation will continue to be an inherently complicated process requiring a sophisticated blend of technology, human analytical review, and post-recovery resources for victimized children. Congress can continue to support solutions to improve the plight of children victimized online through several avenues. First, Congress can recommend as a best practice that all U.S. law enforcement agencies submit CSAM seized from offenders to NCMEC’s CVIP. With the implementation of electronic file transfer enabled by the REPORT Act, the burden on law enforcement submitting all seized images and videos to NCMEC has been resolved. Second, Congress can pass the STOP CSAM Act to require online platforms to improve reporting to the CyberTipline so law enforcement can receive critical information regarding the identity and location of a child victim. Third, Congress can continue to prioritize resources for law enforcement, NCMEC, and service providers to facilitate identifying child victims and ensuring victims receive services needed to enable their recovery process. NCMEC supports the Renewed Hope Act that would provide

¹⁰ NCMEC strongly supported the TAKE IT DOWN Act, which was sponsored by Senator Cruz and Senator Klobuchar and supported by many members of this Subcommittee.

¹¹ NCMEC strongly supports the STOP CSAM Act, which is sponsored by Senator Hawley and Senator Durbin and supported by many members of this Subcommittee.

additional resources and support for law enforcement as part of the global collaboration needed to identify child victims, recover them from their exploitation, and provide essential recovery services.

NCMEC appreciates the opportunity to share with this Subcommittee how we fulfill Congress's authorization to combat child sex trafficking and to identify children depicted in sexually images and videos circulating online. We look forward to continuing to work with members of this Subcommittee and the Senate Judiciary Committee to share information regarding child sexual exploitation online and to collaborate on legislative solutions that could better protect children online.