



**Reinvesting in Children, Youth, and Families
to Advance U.S. Security and Prosperity FY27**
Homeland Security

March 9, 2026

The Honorable Mark Amodei,
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Homeland Security

The Honorable Henry Cuellar,
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Homeland Security

The Honorable Katie Britt, Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Homeland Security

The Honorable Chris Murphy, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Homeland Security

Dear Representative Amodei, Representative Cuellar, Senator Britt, and Senator Murphy,

The Child Partnership is a growing coalition that supports a results-driven approach to U.S. foreign assistance that includes children and youth in smart, efficient investments. On behalf of the Partnership, we respectfully request critical funding increases in the Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations for key Homeland Security accounts dedicated to combating the online sexual exploitation and abuse of children (OSEAC). These include essential investigative and forensic units within Homeland Security Investigations' Cyber Crimes Center (C3): the **Child Exploitation Investigations Unit (CEIU)**, the **Child Victim Identification Program (CVIP)**, the **Computer Forensics Unit (CFU)**, and the HERO Child Rescue Corps, as well as dedicated prevention funding for the Department of Homeland Security's Know2Protect public awareness campaign. Supporting these accounts is critical to protecting American children and national security.

Online sexual exploitation and abuse of children is not only one of the fastest-growing crimes in the world — it is a global epidemic that transcends borders and puts all children at risk, including here in the United States. The digital architecture that enables this abuse — encrypted platforms, livestreaming, cryptocurrency payments, and now generative artificial

intelligence — allows perpetrators to produce, manipulate, and distribute child sexual abuse material (CSAM) at unprecedented speed and scale.

In 2024, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) CyberTipline received **20.5 million reports of suspected child sexual exploitation**, representing **29.2 million separate incidents** and containing **more than 62.9 million files** of suspected abuse material.¹ Reports of **online enticement** surged to **546,000 — a 192 percent increase over 2023**.² Financial sextortion also escalated dramatically, with NCMEC receiving **nearly 100 reports per day** and confirming that **more than three dozen teenage boys have died by suicide** after being targeted.³ Rapid technological misuse is accelerating these crimes: NCMEC documented a **1,325 percent increase in reports involving Generative AI**, enabling the creation of synthetic abuse material, alongside a **more than 200 percent rise in reports of sadistic online exploitation** compared to the previous year.⁴ These trends underscore how offenders are exploiting emerging technologies at an alarming pace and how urgently prevention and enforcement systems must adapt.

The speed of technological change is outpacing traditional investigative models. This threat environment demands a coordinated international response grounded in advanced digital forensics, cross-border intelligence sharing, and proactive disruption of online networks — capabilities uniquely housed within Homeland Security Investigations' Cyber Crimes Center (C3). No other federal entity is as strategically positioned to lead the global fight against online child exploitation.

Recent global data underscore the scale and urgency of this threat. According to the Break the Record campaign, an estimated 82 million girls and 69 million boys were subjected to sexual violence in the past year alone, equivalent to three girls and two boys every second.⁵ In addition, research indicates that more than 300 million children worldwide encountered some form of online sexual exploitation or abuse in the last 12 months.⁶ These abuses constantly cross international borders, putting all children at risk. Victims and perpetrators are connected

¹ Thorn, *What the 2024 NCMEC CyberTipline Report Reveals About Child Safety*, 2025, summarizing data from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children 2024 CyberTipline report.

² National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, *2024 CyberTipline Data Overview*, 2025 release.

³ National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, *Financial Sextortion: Trends and Threats to Children*, 2025 update.

⁴ National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, *Emerging Technology-Facilitated Exploitation Trends*, 2025 data release.

⁵ Break the Record Campaign, global estimates on sexual violence against children, available at <https://www.breaktherecord.org> (accessed March 2026).

⁶ Childlight – Global Child Safety Institute, *Into the Light: Global Estimates of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*, University of Edinburgh (2024), available at <https://www.childlight.org> (accessed March 2026).

through complex, often hidden global networks, networks that require sophisticated, international, and well-resourced interventions to dismantle.

HSI's Cyber Crimes Center (C3) has emerged as a global hub for innovation, investigation, and child victim rescue. In FY2024, its operations led to the identification or rescue of 1,783 children and the arrest of 4,959 offenders, frequently in coordination with foreign law enforcement agencies. The Committee's FY2026 recommendation to increase funding by \$5 million for the Child Exploitation Investigations Unit and \$1 million for the HERO Child-Rescue Corps reflects strong bipartisan recognition of the growing threat. We commend this support. However, the scale and complexity of this crisis demand additional personnel and forensic capacity to meaningfully reduce backlogs, accelerate victim identification, and disrupt evolving digital networks of abuse.

The Global Reach of C3's Programs

Cyber Crimes Center (C3) - \$125 million

The C3, which includes the Child Exploitation Investigations Unit (CEIU), the Computer Forensics Unit, and the Child Victim Identification Program, leads complex, multinational investigations that dismantle large-scale networks distributing child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and rescue victims of severe exploitation. During Operation Renewed Hope III (Feb–Mar 2025), C3 and partners identified 36 victims and generated more than 380 investigative leads across 47 countries. The broader work of C3 contributed to the identification or rescue of 1,783 child victims in FY2024 and 4,959 arrests globally for crimes involving child sexual exploitation.

We respectfully request \$125 million to expand C3's global reach, enhance international coordination, and scale investigative efforts to disrupt predator networks across borders, building upon the Committee's FY2026 investments in CEIU and HERO.

Child Victim Identification Program (CVIP)

CVIP protects American children. Tasked with the critical work of identifying children depicted in CSAM, CVIP currently faces a significant backlog, exacerbated by the more than 56,000 unidentified children in INTERPOL's global database — approximately half believed to be American. To meaningfully reduce this backlog and accelerate victim identification, we respectfully request an additional \$9 million to hire 35 forensic analysts. This targeted investment would allow C3 to dramatically increase the pace of identifications and rescues and build on the investigative capacity strengthened in FY2026.

Computer Forensics Unit (CFU) & HERO Child Rescue Corps

CFU and HERO protect American children and reign in digital criminals. Last year alone, C3 analyzed over seven petabytes of digital evidence. As perpetrators deploy increasingly sophisticated encryption, anonymization tools, and AI-enabled technologies, forensic capacity must keep pace.

The HERO Child-Rescue Corps equips wounded veterans with specialized training to support C3's child exploitation investigations. The Committee's FY2026 increase of \$1 million for HERO training is an important step. To expand capacity nationwide and close the gap between known exploitation and prosecutable cases, we respectfully request an additional \$6 million to expand CFU operations and onboard 32 new HERO apprentices.

Together, these programs form a multi-pronged global response to one of the most urgent threats facing children today. Foreign law enforcement agencies frequently rely on C3 for investigative expertise, training, and technical support — assistance that in many countries would otherwise be unavailable.

Know2Protect Campaign — \$3 million

The Know2Protect campaign protects American children through prevention and public awareness. Launched by the Department of Homeland Security in 2024, Know2Protect is the first nationwide public awareness initiative dedicated to preventing online child sexual exploitation and abuse before victimization occurs. The campaign brings together federal agencies, major technology companies, sports leagues, youth-serving organizations, and community leaders to equip children, teens, parents, and educators with tools to recognize online exploitation risks, report abuse, and support victims.

Know2Protect fills a critical gap between enforcement and prevention. While C3's investigative units pursue offenders and rescue victims, Know2Protect reduces victimization by educating families about online grooming tactics, sextortion schemes, gaming-platform exploitation, and emerging AI-enabled threats. Public awareness is essential as perpetrators increasingly target children through mainstream digital platforms used for school, entertainment, and social connection.

We respectfully request \$3 million to expand Know2Protect's national reach, strengthen partnerships with youth-serving organizations, and scale multilingual prevention resources for schools and communities. This targeted investment will enhance DHS's capacity to prevent exploitation before it occurs, complementing C3's enforcement mission and reinforcing a comprehensive strategy to protect American children.

Together, these programs form a multi-pronged global response to one of the most urgent threats facing children today. Foreign law enforcement agencies frequently rely on C3 for investigative expertise, training, and technical support — assistance that in many countries would otherwise be unavailable.

Strategic Alignment with the Renewed Hope Act

These funding requests align with the bipartisan Renewed Hope Act, introduced by Representative Laurel Lee, which calls for adding 200 critical personnel to DHS's victim identification and investigative units, including CEIU and the Victim Identification Lab. These forensic analysts, investigators, and technical experts would be housed at C3 and are essential to fulfilling DHS's growing global mandate. The requested increases directly support this staffing framework and ensure Congress's prior investments yield measurable results.

The United States has both a moral and strategic imperative to lead on this issue. By building upon the Committee's FY2026 investments and providing targeted increases in FY2027, Congress can ensure that Homeland Security Investigations' Cyber Crimes Center has the personnel, forensic tools, prevention resources, and global partnerships necessary to protect American children and extend protection to millions more at risk worldwide. We respectfully urge you to support these increased investments in FY2027.

Thank you for your time and leadership on this critical issue. We look forward to speaking with your office about investing in young people. If you have any questions, please contact Leila Milani, lmilani@futureswithoutviolence.org, or Suzanne Berman, sberman@childfund.org. We will contact your staff to schedule a meeting.

Sincerely,

The Child Partnership