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The Honorable Dave Reichert  
House Ways and Means Committee  
Chairman,  
Subcommittee on Human Resources  
1129 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lloyd Doggett  
House Ways and Means Committee  
Ranking Member,  
Subcommittee on Human Resources  
1129 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dave Camp  
House Ways and Means Committee  
Chairman  
1102 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sander Levin  
House Ways and Means Committee  
Ranking Member  
1106 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Reichert, Ranking Member Doggett, Chairman Camp and Ranking Member Levin,

On behalf of National Children's Alliance and the almost 800 Children's Advocacy Centers serving victims of child abuse and child sex trafficking, I would like to thank you for introducing H.R. 4058, the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Improving Opportunities for Youth in Foster Care Act, a bill focused not only on better identification and protection of youth at risk for sex trafficking, but also focused on improving data collection and reporting on this horrible crime. You are all true leaders in protecting and defending children and victims of abuse.

National Children's Alliance is the member-accrediting body for Children's Advocacy Centers. CACs are child-focused facilities in which multidisciplinary teams of law enforcement, child protective services, prosecutors, medical professionals, mental healthcare providers, and victim advocates coordinate their efforts to investigate and treat child abuse, while also holding offenders accountable. These centers provide forensic interviews, medical evaluations, trauma-focused mental healthcare and victim advocacy for victims of child abuse and child sexual exploitation. Last year, CACs served more than 294,000 child abuse and trafficking victims, and provided child abuse prevention education to more than 1.2 million individuals in the U.S. alone.

Because CACs have been on the front lines in intervening and preventing child abuse for more than 25 years, they are uniquely equipped to be the first responders for victims of child sex trafficking. Therefore, we support and encourage passage of H.R. 4058 because we believe this bill takes an important step in partnering with the child welfare community to combat child sex trafficking by requiring States to better identify child sex trafficking victims, and provides for better data collection and reporting on trafficking cases.

The majority of CACs were founded after the passage of the Victims of Child Abuse Act in 1990. Because CACs play a key role in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases, as well as a key role in the healing of victims, they are uniquely equipped to be the first responders in identifying victims of child sex trafficking. For more than 25 years, CACs have proven their forensic interviewing techniques, and trauma-focused intervention services, help better identify the needs of victims, as well as help victims through the process. Early identification is needed to stop this cycle of abuse.

In addition, Children's Advocacy Centers have trained forensic interviewers available who understand how to question children and teens in a culturally and developmentally appropriate way. Many CACs, particularly urban ones, are already providing such services to commercially sexually exploited youth and child sex trafficking victims. National Children's Alliance has actively encouraged CACs to develop programs that serve this growing population, and has funded grants in this area to local Children's Advocacy Centers for the past few years.

Furthermore, to encourage the use of CACs by federal law enforcement agencies, NCA has been working with the FBI to overlay the service coverage of Children's Advocacy Centers with locations of the FBI's Innocence Lost Task Forces so that standard operating procedures may be developed for their ongoing use. While individual CACs have been, and continue to be, used by FBI agents as they work these difficult cases, our goal is to ensure that each Task Force has ready access and a standard operating procedure with at least one NCA accredited CAC, to ensure smooth operations and provide the best possible and immediate care for these children/youth. All CACs can and should be used in this way as a regular part of the response repertoire. It is for these reasons that support requiring better identification of child sex trafficking victims in a State's plan, and would encourage any state plan to include the MOUs between the FBI and NCA, on behalf of CACs, to formalize access to this valuable identification resource for federal law enforcement and network of care for vulnerable youth.

Another significant provision included in H.R. 4058 is the establishment of data collection for victims of child sex trafficking. The data collection provisions include improvements on data related to children and youth who run away from foster care and those in child care institutions. To effectively prevent and address child sex trafficking, we must fully understand the extent of the problem and learn more about the children being victimized. H.R. 4058 takes several significant steps to document and report instances of sex trafficking by expanding AFCARs to include data on child sex trafficking and reporting. These data and reports will help identify trends, child characteristics and other factors associated with child sex trafficking, as well as appropriate specialized services for victims of child sex trafficking.

Child sexual abuse is a far too common experience for America's children, and with the number of sex trafficking cases skyrocketing, the ability of Children's Advocacy Centers to serve as first responders is critical. It is for this reason that we support H.R. 4058, the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Improving Opportunities for Youth in Foster Care Act, and urge Congress to pass this much needed piece of legislation.

Sincerely,



Teresa Huizar  
Executive Director