

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 24, 2022

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith  
House Armed Services Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers  
House Armed Services Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Chair Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, Chair Smith, and Ranking Member Rogers:

Thank you for your bipartisan work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to ensure that the Department of Defense is adequately resourced and maintains its ability to advance U.S. national security and provide for our men and women in the military.

As you continue the conference process for the FY23 NDAA, we respectfully request that you include the Victims of Child Abuse Act (VOCAA) Reauthorization Act of 2022 in the reconciled bill. This legislation was incorporated in the House-passed NDAA, and it has both the merit and support to justify inclusion in the final package.

The VOCAA Reauthorization Act of 2022 would reauthorize VOCAA programming through FY29 and provide funding for Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) that serve child victims of violent crimes. VOCAA provides the only dedicated source of funding for CACs, which bring together teams of law enforcement, medical personnel, and social services providers to ensure the best outcome for child victims and help hold perpetrators responsible for their crimes. CACs

are an essential law enforcement resource for local, state, and federal agencies. Each center prevents further victimization by ensuring that forensic interviews are comprehensive and meet the age-appropriate needs of the child. Communities with a CAC have demonstrated increases in successful prosecutions of perpetrators, reductions in re-abuse rates for child victims, and improvements in access to medical and mental health care for victims of child abuse. One analysis found that the utilization of a CAC in a child abuse case saved over \$1,000 per case on average.

There is substantial need for CACs and their services. The number of child victims served by CACs has more than tripled from 100,539 in 2000 to over 386,000 in 2021. Additionally, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' annual Child Maltreatment Report, there were approximately 3.145 million investigations into whether a child was a victim of abuse and neglect, and an estimated 618,000 children were found to have been victimized. Unfortunately, these numbers suggest a gap of hundreds of thousands of cases of suspected abuse that need a CAC-conducted forensic interview. Moreover, there are many cases of substantiated abuse involving children who have either no access to a CAC or an inability to use the program because nearby CACs do not have capacity.

In recent years, military branches have utilized CACs and their services to assist military families. The FY21 NDAA required the Secretary of each branch to seek to enter a memorandum of understanding with the National Children's Alliance (or similar organization) under which CACs and their services were made available to all installations. Furthermore, in FY22, \$1 million was provided for a pilot program to support partnerships between military installations and CACs to support child abuse investigations.

Thank you again for your work to ensure that our military is able to continue to promote U.S. security and interests both at home and abroad. We appreciate your consideration of this request to foster and sustain this important programming.

Sincerely,



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



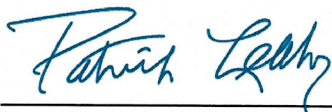
Roy Blunt  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Todd Young  
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



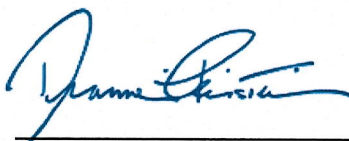
Thom Tillis  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Jim Costa  
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress



Anthony G. Brown  
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress