

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
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MEMORANDUM

February 28, 2022

To: Members of the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Fr: Subcommittee Staff

Re: Hearing on “The Neglected Epidemic of Missing BIPOC Women and Girls”

On Thursday, March 3, 2022, at 10:00 a.m. ET in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building and remotely on the Zoom video platform, the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties will host a hybrid hearing on “The Neglected Epidemic of Missing BIPOC Women and Girls.”

I. BACKGROUND

Out of the more than 250,000 women and girls who were reported missing in 2020, at least 100,000 of them were women and girls of color.¹ Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) women and girls account for a disproportionate share of missing people when looking at the overall racial makeup of the United States population. The scope of the problem is not fully understood and cannot be adequately addressed, because the data on missing BIPOC women and girls is inaccurate and incomplete.

According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the total number of missing or murdered Indigenous women “is unknown because, for several reasons, federal databases do not contain comprehensive national data.”² Latinas/Hispanic women are included with white women within these databases, leading to a lack of specific data regarding that demographic.³

¹ “*It’s Like No One Is Looking for Us*”: How Can States Help When Women of Color Go Missing?, The 19th (Sept. 29, 2021) (online at <https://19thnews.org/2021/09/what-help-can-states-offer-when-women-of-color-go-missing/>).

² Government Accountability Office, *Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women: New Efforts Are Underway but Opportunities Exist to Improve the Federal Response* (Oct. 2021) (GAO-22-104045) (online at www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-104045.pdf).

³ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *2020 NCIC Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics* (2020) (online at www.fbi.gov/file-repository/2020-ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics.pdf/view).

One factor driving the disproportionately high rates of missing Black and Indigenous women and girls are the higher rates of intimate partner violence faced by women in these communities. According to the Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime, American Indian and Alaska Native women experience the highest rates of intimate partner victimization at 48%, closely followed by multi-racial women at 47% and Black women at 45%, while white women experience intimate partner victimization at a rate of 37%.⁴ Just 18% of all victims receive assistance from victim services agencies after experiencing abuse, making it more likely that intimate partner violence will persist.⁵ According to one study, women who receive at least 16 weeks of client-centered advocacy services “experienced less abuse from their former partners at immediate follow-up” than women who did not receive these services.⁶

II. HEARING PURPOSE

This hearing will examine the disproportionate rates of missing BIPOC women and girls, the disparate treatment of missing BIPOC women and girls by law enforcement and media, and potential solutions to these problems.

III. WITNESSES

Ms. Natalie Wilson

Co-Founder

Black and Missing Foundation

Ms. Angel Charley

Executive Director

Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women

Mr. John E. Bischoff, III

Vice President, Missing Children Division

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Ms. Pamela Foster

Mother of Missing Child

Mr. Shawn Wilkinson

Father of Missing Child

⁴ Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime, *Intimate Partner Violence* (2018) (online at https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/ncvrw2018/info_flyers/fact_sheets/2018NCVRW_IPV_508_QC.pdf).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Preventing Intimate Partner Violence Across the Lifespan: A Technical Package of Programs, Policies, and Practices* (2017) (online at www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipv-technicalpackages.pdf) (citing Sullivan, C.M., *Domestic Violence Shelter Services: A Review of the Empirical Evidence*, Harrisburg, PA: National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (Oct. 2012)).

Ms. Patrice Onwuka
Director, Center for Economic Opportunity
Independent Women's Forum

Staff contacts: Devon Ombres and Courtney Koelbel at (202) 225-5051.