

Testimony

Of

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before

the

US House of Representatives

House Judiciary Committee

Subcommittee on Crime and Federal Government

Surveillance

“Protecting Victims of Human Trafficking and Online
Exploitation”

February 27, 2025

Chairman Biggs, Ranking Member McBath, and honorable members of the committee, thank you for having me back to speak. My name is Camille Cooper, and I am the Vice President of Anti Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation at the Tim Tebow Foundation. I also have the honor of sitting on the Advisory Board for Rights4Girls, a non-profit dedicated to advocating for safety and justice for America's trafficked youth.

The Tim Tebow Foundation exists to bring Faith, Hope, and Love to those needing a brighter day in their darkest hour of need. Since inception in 2010, the ministry has served some of the world's Most Vulnerable People across more than 90 countries and counting. This mission is fulfilled daily through ministry outreach focused on Orphan Care + Prevention, Special Needs, Profound Medical Needs, and Anti-Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation. Through direct services, as well as partnerships with 12 other ministries, the Tim Tebow Foundation's Anti-Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation efforts are active in 52 countries around the world. The work of our team and partners includes 6 domestic task forces, 44 safe homes, victim outreach, care coordination, policy and advocacy work, international trainings, and capacity building, and supporting global victim identification and rescue operations.

You have a few great bills before you this Congress. "The Strengthening Child Exploitation Enforcement Act", "The Protect Our Children Act Reauthorization", "The SHIELD Act", and "The Trafficking Survivors Relief Act".

For today, I am going to focus most of my attention on the "**The Renewed Hope Act**" which addresses the need to identify and safeguard the 57,000 UNKNOWN children seen in crime scene photos that depict their rape and torture. Thank you, Chairman Biggs, Representative Laurel Lee, and Representative Wasserman Schultz for your diligent help with that bill. We look forward to having that bill marked up before this committee.

AN EPIDEMIC OF CHILD RAPE

Ten years ago, in a small town, a man started raping his two-year old stepdaughter. For our purposes I am going to call her "Jane Doe". He filmed that abuse and shared it online with other pedophiles. The girl repeatedly disclosed her abuse, but she was not believed. For this little girl, the boogie man was real, and he lived down the hall.

For ten years Jane Doe suffered.

Law enforcement around the world, tried desperately to find her. They had to watch her grow up in the images. Law enforcement attempts to locate and protect her and the thousands of children just like her, were stymied by resource shortages, encryption, and the widespread availability of VPN 's and proxies.

In 2020, the number of children in the US like Jane Doe that had their abuse images in the possession of law enforcement but had yet to be identified and safeguarded was 11,000.

In 2022, anecdotal information put that number at 20,000. In 2 years, it had almost doubled.

When I got to the Tim Tebow Foundation, Timmy, and let me just say - Thank God for Tim Tebow and the leadership team at TTF, we put these children's protection as our number one priority, and we got to work.

With the help of Jon Rouse, the former commander of Australia's Task Force Argos, and Jim Cole, former Homeland Security Special Agent, who stood up HSI's Victim Identification program, we hatched a plan – bring all the experts together from around the world with the goal of determining how many UNKNOWN victims were in the global image database at INTERPOL and operationalize a plan to find them.

The images in the INTERPOL database are the worst of the worst.

- 84% of the images are of actual sexual abuse.
- 47% contained extreme abuse including actual rape, bondage, torture, defecation, and bestiality.

The result of that meeting led Homeland Security Investigations to create the first ever Victim Identification Task Force in the United States and dubbed it "Operation Renewed Hope".

"Renewed Hope" because new advancements in technology made it possible to find the children like Jane Doe for the first time ever.

Over the course of 25 days in the summer of 2023, and the winter of 2024, this task force tentatively identified over 730 children, including Jane Doe. To date, 289 of those children have been confirmed safeguarded. Operation Renewed Hope 3 is currently underway as we speak.

Currently, there are approximately 2.6 million images of unidentified children in that one database. That number represents over 80,000 unidentified children, 57,000 of which are seen in "series", meaning they are in multiple images over time. This tells us that these children are abused by someone who has close access to them.

Based on current data of actively traded series identified at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, we know that family members are the largest category of offender in actively traded series, and of those, fathers produce more child sexual abuse images than any other type of offender category.¹

According to law enforcement, children can be heard crying in these videos and screaming for "Daddy to stop."²

¹ <https://www.missingkids.org/content/dam/missingkids/pdfs/OJJDP-NCMEC-Transparency-CY-2023-Report.pdf>

² <https://protect.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Paul-Gillespie-Interview-with-CBC.pdf>

Across the globe there are several Five-Eye countries with image databases. Due to the nature of online distribution, international collaboration with INTERPOL is essential in identifying and safeguarding American children.

By way of example, the offender in Arizona rapes his children, films it, and shares it with offenders in Spain, or Germany. When those countries make an arrest, seize that offenders' devices, and analyze the images, they will find new victims, whose images then go to INTERPOLs International Child Sexual Exploitation database. Since its inception, 14,000 children or almost half of the identified images in the ICSE database have been American children. This is why collaboration is so critical.

The workforce dedicated exclusively to the painstaking task of looking for clues in these images in efforts to locate these children are a few dozen specialists deep. In the US, a team of seven, including members of the HERO Corps, are seated at HSI's Victim ID program fulltime.

If half of the unidentified children in INTERPOLs database are likely American victims, that means that a team of seven must find 40,000 American victims. This is why the "Renewed Hope Act" is critical. It will increase that fulltime workforce from seven to two hundred.

THE SCALE OF HARM

In 2022, just in the United States, NCMEC referred 2.2 million actionable reports from technology companies and the public to federal, state, and local law enforcement. This does not account for child exploitation activity largely happening on the Clear Web or The Onion Router (TOR). According to the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, between 2018-2020, 5,257,763 verified CSAM media files were found on the "clear web" on platforms like Amazon, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and others.³

Over that same timeframe 150,000 media files of verified CSAM were found on TOR. TOR is a project of a US based non-profit organization.^{4,5} According to its IRS tax form, in 2022, two-thirds of TOR's funding came from government grants.⁶

Additionally in the US, law enforcement has detected roughly 350,000 unique IP addresses seen trading these images across Peer-2-Peer networks. Based on studies of these offenders we know that:

³ https://content.c3p.ca/pdfs/C3P_ProjectArachnidReport_en.pdf

⁴ <https://protectchildren.ca/en/resources-research/what-is-tor/>

⁵ <https://www.torproject.org/about/reports/>

⁶ <https://www.torproject.org/static/findoc/2021-2022-TheTorProject-PublicDisclosureForm990.pdf?h=22c9d0d7>

- 55% - 85% of traders are also hands on offenders. The majority of whom offend against children in their own homes and communities, with an average of 13 victims each.⁷
- 60% of producers of child sexual abuse images are related to the victim or in a position of trust. Fathers, friends of the family, teachers, pastors, doctors, and youth serving individuals.⁸
- 78.1% were White, 12.4% were Hispanic, 6.5% were Black, and 3.0% were other races.⁹

A significant number of these offenders sit behind VPNs. Many VPN providers don't keep records. To safeguard these victims, law enforcement needs providers like Amazon Web Services to require better record keeping from companies providing these services on their cloud.

Of the victims:

- 84% of the images were of actual sexual abuse.
- 47% contained extreme abuse including actual rape, bondage, torture, defecation, and bestiality.
- More than 60% of unidentified victims are under 12.
- 65% of unidentified victims were girls.
- 76.56% are White, 2.13% are Black, 9.85% are Asian, 10.12% are Hispanic-Latino.
- 4.3% of the images were infants. (Over 2,100 infants!)¹⁰

Conservatively, if even half of those 350,000 offenders have an average of 13 victims each, that's 2.2 million undetected child victims.

YOU CAN SAVE THEM

Despite the success of "Operation Renewed Hope", we cannot leave the remaining 56,000 children to languish. They need intervention and they need it quickly. The Renewed Hope Act will authorize 200 new positions for HSI, dedicated to child exploitation investigations and Victim Identification. And It will establish a world class Victim Identification training center because the better trained analysts are, the sooner we can safeguard American children.

⁷ https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/amendment-process/public-hearings-and-meetings/20120215/Testimony_15_Bourke.pdf

⁸ https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/research-and-publications/research-publications/2021/20211013_Production-CP.pdf

⁹ https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/research-and-publications/quick-facts/Child_Pornography_FY22.pdf

¹⁰ <https://ecpat.org/resource/technical-report-towards-a-global-indicator-on-unidentified-victims-in-child-sexual-exploitation-material/>

For a moment, imagine that you are a little girl like Jane Doe. Bedtime, a time for most children to snuggle with their pets, to be read books and drift off to a safe and comforting slumber, is an actual nightmare. Bedtime is filled with dread, and panic. Every night, that's how Jane Doe felt for 12 years.

When "Jane Doe" was finally protected, this is what she said:

*"When the police arrived at my house, I felt happy.
I felt that something
good will happen for me.
God! I was thrilled. I wanted to smile,
because I knew something good
will happen. It was magic!"*

Today, the fate of over 56,000 children are in your hands.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IS A RISK FACTOR FOR TRAFFICKED YOUTH

Before you today is another bill titled "**The Trafficking Survivors Relief Act**". The necessity for this bill is highlighted in the 2023 Polaris study which found that "62% of trafficking survivors surveyed had been cited, arrested, or detained by law enforcement, and 80% stated those arrests were for crimes committed while they were being trafficked".¹¹

There are a lot of public misconceptions about trafficking in the US. The truth about domestic minor sex trafficking is that for girls of color and LGBTQ youth, and children with learning disabilities - the greatest dangers are from child welfare involvement, running away, being groomed online, and homelessness.

- 60% of trafficked youth have foster care histories.¹²
- 28% of trafficked youth had intellectual disabilities.¹³
- LGBTQ youth are 5x more likely to experience being trafficked.¹⁴

¹¹ <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/In-Harms-Way-How-Systems-Fail-Human-Trafficking-Survivors-by-Polaris-modified-June-2023.pdf>

¹² <https://www.npr.org/2013/08/01/207901614/finding-and-stopping-child-sex-trafficking>

¹³ Reid, J. A. (2016). Sex trafficking of girls with intellectual disabilities: An exploratory mixed methods study. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*.

¹⁴ National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE). (2020a). Risk Factors and Indicators. *Human Trafficking in America's Schools*.

- 40% of sex trafficked youth are Black.¹⁵
- 75-80% of unaccompanied minors arriving at the border are victims of sexual abuse and trafficking before they reach the US.¹⁶
- 37% of trafficking is intrafamilial.¹⁷

To add insult to injury, these children, who have likely had a lifetime of abuse leading up to their trafficking victimization, are then cast into the justice system and treated like criminals. As detailed by organizations like Rights4Girls and Georgetown Law in reports like *Criminalized Survivors: Today's Abuse to Prison Pipeline for Girls*, trafficking survivors are routinely coerced into committing criminal acts by their traffickers, however courts rarely consider this trauma history when assessing girls' culpability.¹⁸

Survivors of sex trafficking require law enforcement, prosecutors, and the courts to employ greater empathy and a trauma-informed lens to understand the complex trauma that often underlies a survivor's actions leading up to a criminal offense.

Sex trafficked youth are the only class of rape victim in this country that are criminalized for their abuse.

We must do better. "The Trafficking Survivors Relief Act" will go a long way towards resetting what is a terrible injustice.

¹⁵ <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/cshti0810.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/homesec/R43628.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/In-Harms-Way-How-Systems-Fail-Human-Trafficking-Survivors-by-Polaris-modified-June-2023.pdf>

¹⁸ Yasmin Vafa & Rebecca Epstein, *Criminalized Survivors: Today's Abuse to Prison Pipeline for Girls* (2023), rights4girls.org/criminalizedsurvivorsreport.org

Unique Images and Videos Reviewed by CVIP Disaggregated by Relationship Between Suspected Offender and Child Victim

Relationship Type	CY 2021		CY 2022		CY 2023	
	Total Images/Videos	Unique Images/Videos (based on MD5 hash)	Total Images/Videos	Unique Images/Videos (based on MD5 hash)	Total Images/Videos	Unique Images/Videos (based on MD5 hash)
Aunt	3,851	2,068	3,193	1,905	3,122	2,081
Babysitter, Mentor, Coach, Teacher	234,392	127,942	119,752	69,638	115,354	58,674
Boyfriend	14,141	8,488	10,385	8,124	8,021	6,764
Brother	23,532	9,611	22,710	9,543	14,575	8,859
Brother-in-Law	4,432	2,299	4,011	2,819	2,082	1,133
Cousin	10,733	5,266	12,346	6,612	7,312	4,002
Father	934,759	399,480	692,628	376,633	845,561	362,244
Foster Sibling	546	241	826	468	804	436
Girlfriend	335	335	8	7	11	11
Grandfather	17,250	8,881	16,906	9,289	12,631	7,776
Grandmother	34	24	36	26	139	94
Guardian's Partner	273,499	116,525	148,983	77,413	390,621	164,637
Half Sibling	2,495	1,160	2,539	1,250	1,895	859
Legal Guardian	45,810	21,974	40,745	20,354	35,778	18,550
Mother	131,777	50,956	80,981	49,396	282,223	134,688
Neighbor/Family friend	444,422	209,373	338,145	172,858	383,084	212,720
Online Enticement/Self & Offender Produced	233,177	90,386	178,465	115,319	115,531	70,104
Other Relative	21,525	12,031	33,076	26,190	36,112	18,987
Photographer	175,440	77,247	92,228	53,904	185,431	80,093
Trafficking	48,478	20,423	37,472	17,547	46,666	21,340
Sister	9,909	4,024	7,163	4,199	4,227	1,995
Step-Father	191,915	80,080	166,067	100,676	173,314	74,224
Step-Grandparent	24,032	9,312	14,808	7,830	14,604	6,042
Step-Mother	4,813	2,122	3,379	1,607	3,113	1,146
Stranger	10,578	4,630	8,513	5,592	11,577	5,058
Uncle	276,524	119,621	187,597	99,164	195,602	85,222



CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING AND BLACK GIRLS

WHAT IS CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING?

Child Sex Trafficking occurs any time a person under the age of 18 exchanges any sex act for anything of value (e.g., food, shelter, money, etc.).ⁱ

WHAT MAKES A YOUTH VULNERABLE TO TRAFFICKING?

The following factors make youth vulnerable to sex trafficking and exploitation.ⁱⁱ

- A history of sexual and/or physical abuse
- Community or family instability
- Child welfare involvement, especially out-of-home foster care placement
- Being a runaway or homeless youth
- Disconnection from the education system
- Poverty

BLACK GIRLS ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY AT RISK

Black girls are more likely to experience the risk factors listed above. In addition, studies show that Black girls become trafficked at younger ages than their racial counterparts.ⁱⁱⁱ They are over 3x more likely to experience poverty than their white peers,^{iv} and consequently more likely to be disconnected from schools and other community supports.^v Black girls also witness and experience multiple forms of violence at higher rates than their white peers.^{vi}

A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS ARE BLACK GIRLS

- Of the more than 10,000 cases reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, nearly 40% were Black women and girls—the highest of any racial group.^{vii}
- In Louisiana, 89% of the state's child sex trafficking victims were girls and 54% were Black.^{viii}
- In King County, Washington, 92% of child sex trafficking victims are female and 41% are Black, though Black people only comprise 7% of the population.^{ix}
- In LA County, two-thirds of trafficked youth are Black, though only 7.4% of the child population in LA is Black.^x

THE ADULTIFICATION OF BLACK GIRLS CONTRIBUTES TO THEIR CRIMINALIZATION

"Adultification" is a unique form of intersectional bias against Black girls that perceives them as older and less innocent than their white peers.^{xi} According to research:

- Black girls are perceived as more adult-like than their white peers at almost every stage of childhood, starting at age 5, peaking at ages 10 to 14, and continuing into older adolescence.^{xii}
- Stereotypes that are attributed to Black women^{xiii} are projected onto Black girls, leading to their hypersexualization and the perception that Black girls exercise more agency when engaging in the commercial sex trade even when they are too young to consent.^{xiv}
- Studies show that Black girls are seen to be less traumatized by child sexual abuse than their peers,^{xv} more likely to be blamed for their victimization,^{xvi} and are subject to harsher treatment due to being seen as more responsible for their actions.^{xvii}
- On average, only 30% of Black youth are characterized as victims compared to 66% of their white counterparts.^{xviii}
- Black children are over 5x more likely to be arrested on prostitution charges than their white peers.^{xix}

