

**Congresswoman Ann Wagner (MO-02) testimony for House Judiciary Committee
(10.22.21)**

Protecting children from exploitation is one of the most important responsibilities we all share as public officials. It is our job to ensure that the communities we represent are aware of the potential dangers facing children, that laws are properly enforced against those facilitating trafficking and abuse, and that survivors are given the support necessary to help them break free from exploitation.

In July of 2020, Joe Biden stated that he would “prevent human trafficking across the globe by strengthening the rule of law”. However, through the first seven months of the Biden Administration, over 112,000 unaccompanied children have crossed our southern border—more than all of 2019 and 2020 combined. These minors are at the highest risk of being trafficked and exploited, and the criminal networks facilitating their abuse are making tens of millions of dollars. The Biden Administration’s open border policies caused this humanitarian disaster, and the lawlessness must be stopped.

The prevalence of human trafficking and sexual exploitation is not only increasing at the border, but in communities across the country as well. The pandemic has forced our kids into isolation, where they are seeking out social interaction through the internet. Traffickers know this and have ramped up their grooming activity online, tricking vulnerable children into trusting them and sending explicit photos and videos, then using that sensitive material to extort the kids into engaging in sexual acts—both online and in person.

Among the worst facilitators of this exploitation is the website, OnlyFans.com. In just this year alone, OnlyFans has been connected to human trafficking, selling Child Sexual Abuse Material, kidnapping, sexual battery, sexual servitude, extortion, and child rape. My office has been in contact with federal agents, local detectives, and victim advocacy groups that are all sounding the alarm about this website and others like it. One agent with Homeland Security Investigations told us he sees up to 50 files of Child Sexual Abuse Material per day that have originated on OnlyFans. This is absolutely unconscionable.

On August 10th, I led a letter with over 100 Members of Congress calling on the Department of Justice to investigate this website, and after 73 days I have yet to receive a response. In that time, the media has reported multiple crimes related to OnlyFans, including the human trafficking of a minor and aggravated child abuse. The Department of Justice must act and stop this from happening.

With these horrific crimes on the rise, we must give law enforcement the tools to support survivors. That is why I introduced H.R. 1527, the *Homeland Security Investigations Victim Assistance Act*, a bipartisan bill that would expand HSI’s Victim Assistance Program. This vital program provides trained specialists to work alongside law enforcement to help trafficking survivors assist investigators in apprehending their abuser. I strongly urge this committee to pass this legislation to help survivors get the justice they deserve.

It is my sincere hope that this committee will join me in the fight against trafficking and force the Biden Administration to take substantive and immediate action to protect kids at the border and across the United States.