



March 15, 2016

The Honorable Rob Portman
Chairman
Permanent Subcommittee on
Investigations
Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Claire McCaskill
Ranking Member
Permanent Subcommittee on
Investigations
Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Portman and Ranking Member McCaskill:

On behalf of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) and the families and children we serve, I am writing to express our strong support for your resolution directing the Senate Legal Counsel to bring a civil action to enforce a subpoena issued by your Subcommittee to the Chief Executive Officer of Backpage (S. Res. 377). We commend you for your leadership on this investigation and your dedication to assisting victims of child sex trafficking and their families.

NCMEC is a private, non-profit organization that for over 31 years has been designated by Congress to serve as the national clearinghouse on issues related to missing and exploited children. In this role, NCMEC has learned a great deal about child sex trafficking, including its pervasive growth online and the devastating impact this crime has on children and their families. We know that sex trafficking is a crime that takes place in nearly every community in the United States and increasingly children are sold for sex online on websites like Backpage.com.

NCMEC receives reports of child sex trafficking through intakes of missing child cases, requests for analytical assistance, and reports to the CyberTipline, the reporting mechanism for child sexual exploitation crimes. In recent years, NCMEC has witnessed an increase in missing and exploited child cases involving the online trafficking of children for sex. In 2015, NCMEC assisted with approximately 10,000 reports regarding possible child sex trafficking, but we know this is only a small fraction of suspected child sex trafficking victims in this country.

Even more concerning is that a majority of child sex trafficking cases reported to NCMEC involve ads posted on Backpage.com. More than seventy-one percent (71%) of all child sex trafficking reports submitted by members of the public to NCMEC relate to Backpage ads. We also have seen a disturbing trend of runaway children trafficked on Backpage.com. Today, when we are looking for a runaway child who we have reason to believe might be trafficked, Backpage.com is the first place we look for the child.

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www.cybertipline.com

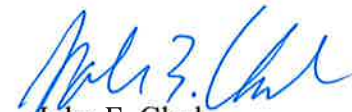
Other Offices
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We have long been alarmed about Backpage's business practices that fail to prevent children from being sold for sex on its website. The work of your Subcommittee to investigate these practices and to demand answers is to be widely commended.

NCMEC is proud to lend our support to this important resolution, and we hope the Senate's work can uncover more information regarding the use of online websites, such as Backpage.com, to traffic children. We are grateful for your dedication to the safety of our nation's children and look forward to continuing to work with you and others who are working tirelessly to halt the terrible tragedy of online child sex trafficking.

Sincerely,



John F. Clark
President and CEO