

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 4, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education
Committee on Appropriations

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Blunt, and Ranking Member Murray:

As sponsors of the *National Child Abuse Help Hotline Act of 2020*, we ask you to prioritize supplemental funding for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to support the immediate, pandemic-related needs of the National Child Abuse Hotline. The Hotline, which is currently operated by Childhelp in part through an ACF innovation grant, is helping children and families in critical need of prevention and intervention services. Specifically, we are requesting \$1 million to support both the hotline's phone and online and text platforms.

The current public health crisis threatens to greatly exacerbate child abuse and neglect, and a number of experts estimate that child abuse is currently being underreported. With stay-at-home orders, school closures, and high unemployment, parents and caregivers are experiencing financial stress, isolation, and new anxieties at the very time when children have less exposure to mandatory reporters and safe environments where they may normally escape abuse or seek help. Since these traditional resources may not be readily available during the pandemic, the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline is one much-needed resource that is accessible to children and families across the country. The Hotline connects those in need with masters-level social workers who are there to offer confidential crisis intervention and provide information, literature, and referrals to emergency, social service, and support resources.

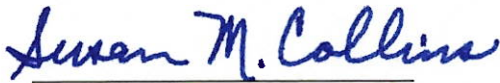
Access to prevention and intervention services nationwide has become more critical in the face of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The hotline saw call volumes increase by 33 percent from February to May, and Childhelp's text and online chat platform, which is supported by ACF, has experienced a 66 percent increase in outreach since February. These statistics demonstrate the increased need for services, but, unfortunately, the Hotline's current budget does not support additional outreach or advertising that could be used to contact more individuals in need and at-risk.

More federal support for ACF to support this critical resource will improve its ability to reach children of all ages, as well as parents or caregivers. During a time when these supports are

needed more than ever, we believe the existing infrastructure and experience of the National Child Abuse Hotline should be used. Action and investment now can help prevent the worst possible outcome—letting children fall through the cracks during an already traumatizing crisis.

We thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator