

Bill Summary
S. 3354, the *Missing Children's Assistance Act of 2018*

The *Missing Children's Assistance Act* (MCAA) was last reauthorized in 2013. Given the sensitive nature of this work and past federal efforts to reauthorize the program in a timely manner, it is imperative the important work conducted with funding under this act be able to continue providing the crucial services and assistance needed by victims and their families. S. 3354, the *Missing Children's Assistance Act of 2018*, is the companion bill to H.R. 1808, the *Improving Support for Missing and Exploited Children Act of 2017*, which passed the House unanimously in 2017. The bill updates and streamlines the uses of funds to better align required activities with current practice which will allow the continuation of the imperative support needed for victims and families during the difficult times they face. The bill extends the authorization of the program through fiscal year 2023 and, makes the following legislative improvements to current law:

- **Clarifies Existing Structures to Align with Current Practice.** The services provided under the grant to recover missing and exploited children are crucial to the safety and well-being of communities, families, and children across the nation. In order to properly serve victims and families, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), the current grantee, has developed resources to address growing areas of concern where children are highly susceptible to malicious intent. As such, S. 3354 updates the findings of Congress to reflect the awareness that a growing number of children are victims of child sex trafficking and sextortion.
- **Updates Requirements to Better Serve Victims and Families.** NCMEC provides resources and assistance to entities, states, public and private nonprofits, local educational agencies, local governments, and individuals to help serve victims and families during difficult times. Through cohesive collaboration with state and local organizations and individuals, NCMEC is able to ensure the best quality of assistance is provided to help victims and families recover. To further this crucial assistance, S. 3354 requires the grantee to provide information on innovative and model programs, services, and legislation that benefit missing and exploited children. This information, in combination with other required disseminated assistance information relating to free or low-cost legal work, food, lodging, and transportation services, serves as critical support for missing and exploited children and their families.
- **Protects Children Missing from State Care and Victims of Sex Trafficking.** Throughout recent years, there has been an increase in the number of children reported as missing from state care and those whom have become victims or are at-risk of being victims of sex trafficking. In 2017, one in seven endangered runaways reported to NCMEC were likely victims of sex trafficking. Of these, 88 percent were in the care of social services or foster care when they went missing. In order to better align MCAA with current practice to combat these trends, S. 3354 clarifies the work the grantee does to provide technical assistance and education to families, law enforcement agencies, state and local governments, elements of the criminal justice system, non-government agencies, elementary and secondary schools, and the general public regarding how to

proactively respond to children missing from the state welfare systems and victims or those at-risk of being victims of child sex trafficking. By updating this provision to address the emerging trends, the bill ensures entities and individuals are best prepared to help victims and families while working to combat and curve the trends.

- **Provides Assistance in Identifying and Locating Abductors and Missing Children** S. 3354 clarifies requirements for the grantee to provide support and technical assistance to entities and individuals working to recover missing, abducted, or exploited children. NCMEC helps entities and individuals locate and identify potential abductors, offenders, and victims. In addition, the bill continues the requirement that the grantee provide assistance and support relating to forensic information of victims to law enforcement entities, other individuals involved in child abduction and exploitation cases, and families, which might include facial reconstruction of skeletal remains and similar techniques to assist in the identification of unidentified deceased children. Through the support and assistance from NCMEC, the families and entities working to recover missing, exploited, and abducted children will be able to use reliable data and resources to locate and identify victims.
- **Addresses Rising Trends in Technology Relating to Abuse.** Given the prevalent usage of, and easy access to, technology in children's daily lives, S. 3354 updates requirements relating to how the grantee works with families, law enforcement, technology companies, and other entities and individuals on methods to combat and reduce the existence and distribution of online images and videos associated with sexually exploited children. Methods include (1) continuing operations of the CyberTipline, which provides individuals and electronic service providers an effective means of reporting child sexual exploitation on the Internet and in other forums; and (2) operating a child victim identification program that helps identify victims of child pornography and other sexual crimes in order to support the recovery of children from sexually exploited situations. S. 3354 also maintains the requirement that NCMEC develop and disseminate programs and information to families, law enforcement, schools, child and youth-serving organizations, and other related entities relating to the prevention of child abduction and sexual exploitation, internet safety, including tips for social media and cyberbullying, sexting, and sextortion. By updating these requirements to address the serious nature of these trends, the bill ensures the best possible services and preemptive measures are taken to prevent youth becoming victims and helping those who have already been victimized.
- **Updates Reporting Requirements to Provide Additional Transparency.** S. 3354 updates the reporting requirements to include making its reports to OJJDP publicly available, as appropriate. This includes information relating to the number of children nationwide who are reported to NCMEC as (1) missing; (2) victims of non-family abductions; (3) victims of family abductions; and (4) the number of children recovered nationwide whose recovery was reported to NCMEC. Additionally, the grantee is required to follow the incidence of attempted child abductions in order to identify links and patterns, and provide such information to law enforcement agencies as well as the general public as appropriate. This information will better help provide the needed

services and preemptive measures to help victims, those at-risk of becoming victims, and their families.