



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Republican Leader
Committee on Education and Labor
Markup of H.R. 2480, *Stronger Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act
(CAPTA)*
May 8, 2019**

“Thank you also, Mr. Chairman, for helping to make this a bipartisan bill. You and I have spoken several times over the past few weeks as the bill before the committee this morning has taken shape. When our roles were reversed, we worked closely in a similar fashion to produce, to report, and ultimately to pass much-needed bipartisan reforms to the *Juvenile Justice Act* and the reauthorization of the *Missing Children’s Assistance Act*.

When it comes to serving the most vulnerable Americans, children and youth, you and I and the other members of this committee have built a record of which we can all be proud. I hope, and I believe, we can continue to build on those accomplishments.

It says a lot about Washington that those efforts, and what we’re doing here today, don’t capture a lot of attention. I don’t think that’s because what we’re doing now and what we did then was bipartisan, although it’s certainly a break in the trend. The more likely reason is that when it comes to children who have been hurt or children who are in danger, the solutions are complicated. Every circumstance is unique, and there are so many contributing factors. All we seem to know for certain is that abuse is wrong, it shouldn’t have happened, and it could have been prevented. Beyond that, we have more questions than answers.

The people who go to work every day to serve and to provide treatment to children and families who have experienced child abuse have a lot of those answers, and I’m pleased that the legislation before us now empowers them to be the leaders in preventing and treating child abuse.

Last year, we saw a House-wide effort to address the scourge of opioid abuse in communities across the country. As this committee met for hearings and worked to determine our own contributions to that effort, the impact opioid abuse and addiction is having on innocent children came into sharper focus. In many ways, today's legislation has its roots in those informative proceedings. I believe this is the way we should approach a reauthorization like this one.

With the aptly-named *Stronger Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act*, or Stronger CAPTA, we have decided to look forward, not backward, but we've also allowed for current events and circumstances to inform our views. Understanding the impact of opioids on those close to the individuals battling addiction gave members a whole new context for how communities can play a role in recognizing, treating, and hopefully preventing future child abuse, and I'm glad to see that as such a focus in this legislation.

Since 1974, CAPTA has been the federal law under which states have been able to combat child abuse and neglect, primarily through grant funding to develop programs aimed at prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment. When we talk about numbers at this committee, whether it's in the form of appropriated or budgeted dollars or other statistics, I often remind members that we are talking about individual lives and in this case, very vulnerable lives.

That makes the numbers we're going to discuss today truly heartbreaking. In 2016, there were 4.1 million referrals to child protective services nationwide that involved approximately 7.4 million children. In the end, about 676,000 children were determined to have been the victims of abuse or neglect.

There's not a single person in this room who wouldn't have put themselves, physically, between any of those children and their abusers if we could have. Any decent person would. That's why it's such a good thing that the reforms in today's legislation are designed to prepare better and further empower those remarkable individuals who have been educated and equipped to detect and address child abuse in their communities.

The funding we are authorizing today will go to research and technical assistance that will directly benefit providers and administrators who must constantly reassess the techniques and treatment strategies they offer families in need.

Additionally, this bill includes support for the development of new strategies and continued best practices for reducing the rates of child abuse and neglect that result from substance abuse on the part of parents.

This bill seeks to prevent and treat child abuse by harnessing the power of community involvement. We want to see abuse prevented before it ever happens, and one of the best ways we can make that a reality is to encourage parents, to show them that they can protect and provide for their children in positive ways. We know that it's a sense of reliable community and personal relationships that can do the most good, and this legislation is meant to show that both are tangible resources for families. This legislation also makes clear that the treatment of children and service to families must take priority over government paperwork.

When the time comes to reauthorize CAPTA in the future, I hope members of this committee will look back on the bill before us now as a roadmap for their way forward. Stronger CAPTA respects and adheres to the law's original intent, modernizes methods, and equips those who know better than we do to serve children and families in a better way than they've been served before.

We all wish we lived in a world where laws like CAPTA would not be necessary. We do not. But by taking our cues from those who make it their life's work to stand between children and tragedy, who support parents who feel they have no hope, I believe we have arrived at a piece of legislation that does not hinder, but quite possibly will help to protect children and serve hurting families in diverse communities across the country."

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