

Opening Remarks

Thank you, Chair Foxx, for holding this hearing, and thank you, Mr. Clark, for your testimony and expertise.

Since it was established in 1984, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has been working to reunite missing children with their families and loved ones.

In 2016, NCMEC worked on more than 20,500 missing children cases, and in Oregon, currently there are 65 active missing children cases on NCMEC’s website. These are children who are separated from their families, who have loved ones looking for them, and who need to be found.

In fact, just this week, a 9 year old girl from Gresham, Oregon, went missing overnight. Thankfully, she was located and reunited with her mother after a concerned citizen, who had seen her picture on the local news, recognized her and called police.

The quick distribution of the girl’s picture and fast thinking of a neighbor prevented a tragedy from occurring.

Unfortunately, many other families are not as lucky. The world can be a dangerous place for our children, and our rapidly-advancing technology can make it even more challenging to protect our kids.

Mr. Clark, I applaud the work you and NCMEC have done to not only keep up with technological advances, but to use those advances to better protect children.

I'm looking forward to hearing more from you about your CyberTipline initiative to receive tips about online sexual exploitation, the NetSmartz411 program to educate parents about online safety, and the KidSmartz program to better prepare kids for online risks.

I also want to make sure we address the particular dangers facing minority children and LGBTQ youth.

It is a tragic fact that abductions of minority children are grossly underreported in the media. In Washington, D.C., alone, 10 children of color have been reported missing since the beginning of March, and only two have been found so far.

Ten missing children in two weeks is unspeakable, and the media has been slow to report on these youth. As we know, media reports about missing children are often critical for reuniting kids and families.

Additionally, LGBTQ youth are at an increased risk of homelessness if they do not feel welcome in their homes or communities. A 2015 study from the Urban Institute told the heartbreaking stories of LGBTQ youth who run away from home and engage in “survival sex” —the practice of trading sex for money, food, or a place to stay.

We must do everything we can to make sure that we are protecting all children—including our children of color and LGBTQ youth.

I want to close by expressing my gratitude to Chair Foxx and the Committee for the bipartisan commitment to extending authorization of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and maintaining the Center’s independent status.

I hope that we can continue to work together to protect missing and exploited children, and reunite families.

Thank you again, Chair Foxx, and I yield the balance of my time.