

# HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT FOR GIRLS

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The Honorable Frank Wolf, Chairman  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

The Honorable Chaka Fattah, Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski, Chair  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

April 18, 2013

Dear Chairs Wolf and Mikulski and Ranking Members Fattah and Shelby:

On behalf of Human Rights Project for Girls (Rights4Girls), a national human rights organization focused on gender-based violence and its impact on vulnerable young women and girls, we are writing to seek your assistance to fund the programs listed below that are vital to protecting and serving the needs of vulnerable young women and girls in the U.S.

Earlier this year, Congress voted overwhelmingly to reauthorize the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) (P.L.113-4). The TVPA is the core of our nation's efforts to prevent, prosecute, and serve human trafficking victims. Sadly, human trafficking and specifically, domestic child sex trafficking—or the commercial sexual exploitation of American born victims, is a growing phenomenon. Many of these child victims are girls. They are runaways and foster youth. Children who have fallen through the cracks of our child welfare system. Not only do most of these girls have histories of severe abuse and neglect that led to their increased vulnerability to trafficking, but once trafficked, these children then face the severe trauma of being property that requires intensive therapy and rehabilitation. Accordingly, these child victims require comprehensive case management and trauma-informed therapeutic interventions to assist them towards their path to recovery.

The Department of Justice has reported that the average age of entry for girls into commercial sexual exploitation is between just 12 to 14 years old. Again, most of these girls come out of a broken child welfare system where they often run away to escape instances of sexual or physical abuse and neglect. Unfortunately, when these girls run, they are often locked up in the juvenile justice system for the status offense of 'running away.' And if they are not locked up right away, they end up targets for traffickers and pimps while on the streets, eventually ending up in the juvenile justice system for prostitution related offenses despite not being of age to provide valid consent to sex. Once in detention, these girls are forced to navigate a system that is designed for boys and not equipped to deal with the specific needs of girls. Study after study has shown that

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the vast majority of girls in the juvenile justice system have suffered physical and sexual abuse prior to entering the system—not to mention their added vulnerability to abuse and trauma once in the system by staff and other inmates. Moreover, from what we now know about domestic child sex trafficking, it is apparent that many of these victims are being routed to the juvenile justice system for juvenile ‘prostitution’ instead of being treated as victims of crime. Therefore, it is crucial to provide for gender-specific, trauma-informed interventions in the juvenile justice system to address the specific needs of these girls and be mindful of the complex histories of trauma they have endured prior to their juvenile justice involvement.

Therefore with your help and leadership, we believe it is crucial to protect and support the funding available to better serve this vulnerable population. Accordingly, we request the following:

## **Office of Justice Programs**

OVC Crime Victims Fund: The President in his FY 2014 Budget proposed \$10 million for domestic trafficking victims grants. We believe that this designation is crucial as domestic victims have often been lost in the appropriations process. Although the TVPA has authorized specific funds for domestic victims under the Department of Justice, those funds have never been fully appropriated. This is true despite the fact that the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that between June 2008 and January 2009, 83% of confirmed sex trafficking cases in the U.S. involved U.S. citizens. To date, there has only been one pilot program serving domestic child victims that was established in 2009 under the Office of Victims of Crime. This is grossly inadequate giving the size and scope of this issue as it affects domestic victims in the U.S. Yet, year after year, almost all of the funds and resources for trafficking have been routed exclusively towards foreign victims of trafficking here in the U.S. Therefore, we believe it is crucial to preserve this designation to finally begin serving domestic victims of trafficking.

## **Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)**

We were very pleased to see that the President included \$178 million for critical juvenile justice programs in his budget proposal. Specifically, the President is requesting the following:

- \$70 million for the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) Title II State Formula Grants Program;
- \$56 million for JJDP Title V Delinquency Prevention Program, \$20 million of which will focus on reversing the school-to-prison pipeline;
- \$30 million for the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) Program;
- \$20 million in new incentive grants to help states implement evidence-based strategies that reduce youth incarceration and foster better outcomes for youth;

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- \$25 million in community-based violence prevention initiatives, 50% of which will support public health approaches to violence prevention; and
- \$2 million for competitive grants that focus on girls in the juvenile justice system.

We think this \$2 million focused on girls in the juvenile justice system is particularly critical given that the proportion of girls entering the system has been steadily increasing over the past several decades, with little to no funding dedicated specifically towards gender specific interventions for girls.

## **Incentive Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention Programs under JJDP**

Although Congress has failed to reauthorize the JJDP in recent years, new legislation has been introduced in the House by Representative DeLauro that would allow for girls in detention to receive much needed gender-responsive services. The “Improving the Juvenile Justice System for Girls Act of 2013” is a critical piece of legislation in that it would allow for incentive grants to provide gender-responsive, trauma-specific services for girls by amending Title V, Part B of the JJDP to add gender-responsive services to the list of authorized grant purposes. The bill serves as recognition of the fact that these are essential interventions given girls’ distinct pathways into the juvenile justice system. Unlike boys, girls’ pathways into the system are marked by histories of severe physical and often sexual abuse and therefore these specific interventions are necessary to effectively serve and rehabilitate these girls. Moreover, studies have shown that trauma-informed responses to children in the juvenile justice system reduce recidivism.

We are mindful of the extremely difficult funding situation you are facing in FY 2014, but we truly believe the above requests are imperative to finally addressing the needs of domestic child trafficking victims in the U.S. specifically, and the needs of our nation’s most vulnerable girls more generally.

We thank you for your consideration of these requests and for your continued leadership in protecting our most vulnerable daughters.

Sincerely,

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Washington, DC

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The Honorable Jack Kingston, Chairman  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and  
Related Agencies

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and  
Related Agencies

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and  
Related Agencies

The Honorable Jerry Moran, Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and  
Related Agencies

April 18, 2013

Dear Chairmen Kingston and Harkin and Ranking Members DeLauro and Moran:

On behalf of Human Rights Project for Girls (Rights4Girls), a national human rights organization focused on gender-based violence and its impact on vulnerable young women and girls, we are writing to seek your assistance to fund the programs listed below that are vital to protecting and serving the needs of vulnerable young women and girls in the U.S.

Earlier this year, Congress voted overwhelmingly to reauthorize the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) (P.L.113-4). The TVPA is the core of our nation's efforts to prevent, prosecute, and serve human trafficking victims. Sadly, human trafficking and specifically, domestic child sex trafficking—or the commercial sexual exploitation of American born victims, is a growing phenomenon. Many of these child victims are girls. They are runaways and foster youth. Children who have fallen through the cracks of our child welfare system. Not only do most of these girls have histories of severe abuse and neglect that led to their increased vulnerability to trafficking, but once trafficked, these children then face the severe trauma of being propertyed that requires intensive therapy and rehabilitation. Accordingly, these child victims require comprehensive case management and trauma-informed therapeutic interventions to assist them towards their path to recovery.

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Therefore with your help and leadership, we believe it is crucial to protect and support the funding available to better serve this vulnerable population. Accordingly, we request the following:

## **Administration for Children and Families**

The President's budget requests \$10 million under ACF for domestic victims of trafficking. Though TVPA funds have historically been authorized to HHS, virtually all funds for trafficking victims went solely to aid foreign nationals. In fact, in all the years since the passage of the TVPA, \$0 have been appropriated through HHS for domestic victims of trafficking despite the millions authorized. This is the first year they have requested any funds for domestic victims and so we believe the preservation of this \$10 million is vital to finally beginning to address the needs of domestic victims of trafficking.

We are mindful of the extremely difficult funding situation you are facing in FY 2014, but we truly believe the above requests are imperative to finally addressing the needs of domestic child trafficking victims in the U.S. specifically, and the needs of our nation's most vulnerable girls more generally.

We thank you for your consideration of these requests and for your continued leadership in protecting our most vulnerable daughters.

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