

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

March 3, 2020

The Honorable Gene Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
United States Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

We write to request a review of the federal government's efforts to combat the alarming growth in the amount of child sexual abuse material available online. A recent New York Times article stated that technology companies reported more than 69 million online photos, videos, and other content related to child sexual abuse in 2019, which was more than triple the number reported in 2017.<sup>1</sup>

The scale, severity, and complexity of this problem creates an urgent need for our government to review current efforts and increase our collective response to keep our kids safe. In New Hampshire, in Tennessee, and in Ohio, our state law enforcement agencies have shared with us the significant challenges that they face in managing both the volume of child sexual abuse material and in dealing with the various policies of electronic communication services and technology companies during investigations.

In 2011, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report on Combating Child Pornography (GAO-11-334), which was mandated by the *PROTECT Our Children Act of 2008*. We are writing to request that GAO conduct an updated review of the federal government's efforts to address child sexual abuse material online. Specifically, we request that GAO collect information and report on the following:

1. What is the scope of child sexual abuse material online and what current activities and efforts does the federal government have underway to address this problem?
  - a. How does the federal government assess and map the totality of child sexual abuse material online?

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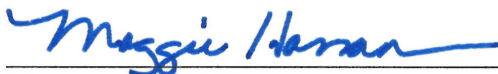
<sup>1</sup>Tech Companies Detect a Surge in Online Videos of Child Sexual Abuse” by Gabriel J.X. Dance and Michael H. Keller, New York Times (Feb. 7, 2020).

- b. What are the spectrum of federal efforts, ranging from prevention to survivor services, and how are these efforts tailored to address the unique needs and circumstances of various age groups?
    - c. To what extent are federal efforts to counter the production and availability of online child sexual abuse material effective, and how is that effectiveness assessed?
    - d. How are these efforts tailored differently to address social media, messenger applications, encryption technology, dedicated encryption platforms and services, and the “dark web”?
  2. How are federal departments and agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Department of Education, and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and non-profit organizations, such as the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), working together and with state and local entities to address the problem of child sexual abuse material online?
    - a. What processes, policies, and infrastructure are in place to support federal interagency collaboration and information sharing with state and local law enforcement and government agencies and non-profit organizations to combat child sexual abuse material?
    - b. What policies are in place to ensure that Internet Crimes Against Children task forces are adequately resourced and have sufficient information sharing with federal, state, and local partners?
    - c. What is the status of DOJ efforts to fulfill the requirements of the *PROTECT Our Children Act of 2008*?
  3. What is the state of information sharing, cooperation, and the general relationship between industry and federal government efforts to combat child sexual abuse material online?
    - a. In what ways is industry supporting federal efforts to counter child sexual abuse material online?
    - b. In what ways are industry practices or standards an impediment to federal and local law enforcement efforts to counter child sexual abuse material online?
    - c. What are the challenges unique to each of the following industry sectors, and has the interagency identified needs or developed strategies specific to each sector?
      - i. Internet service providers
      - ii. Social media platforms
      - iii. Search engines
      - iv. Remote storage and hosting services
      - v. Image and video hosting services, including, but not limited to, services focused primarily on legal pornographic content
      - vi. End-to-end encryption platforms or services
      - vii. Livestreaming video services
      - viii. Online video game platforms and services, including messaging services
      - ix. Instant messaging services
      - x. Email services

4. What are current gaps in the federal government's efforts to combat child sexual abuse material online?
  - a. Include gaps as they relate to state and local efforts.
  - b. Include gaps as they relate to educational institutions and raising awareness among youth.
  - c. Include gaps as they relate to tailoring age-appropriate awareness programs and services to survivors.
  - d. Include gaps as they relate to prevention programming, survivor services, investigations, charging, prosecution, and sentencing.
  
5. What challenges exist for the federal government when addressing the problem of child sexual abuse material online, and what steps has the federal government taken to address these challenges?

Should you have questions about this request, please contact Nicholas Malatesta for Senator Hassan at 202-224-3324, or Will Pisano for Representative Kuster at 202-225-5206.

Sincerely,



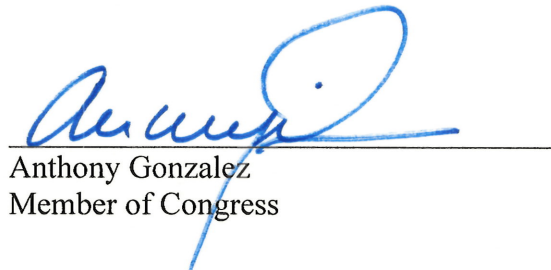
Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator



Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress



Anthony Gonzalez  
Member of Congress