



Board of Directors

October 28, 2013

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ted Poe
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Maloney and Congressman Poe,

As the nation's leading network of homeless and runaway youth programs, the National Network for Youth (NN4Y) enthusiastically endorses your proposed legislation, the *Runaway Reporting Improvement Act of 2013*.

The National Network for Youth champions the needs of runaway, homeless, and other disconnected youth through strengthening the capacity of community-based services, facilitating resource sharing, and educating the public and policy makers. NN4Y members work collaboratively to prevent youth homelessness and the inherent risks of living on the streets, which include: exploitation, human trafficking, criminal justice involvement, health deterioration and death. NN4Y knows that interventions are successful when grounded in partnerships among families, community-based organizations, schools, federal agencies, and law enforcement.

The *Runaway Reporting Improvement Act of 2013* seeks to assist parents and other adults caring for runaway and missing children and youth. Under this law, law enforcement agencies receiving reports of runaway or missing children would connect the individuals making the reports to the resources and services of the National Runaway Safeline (NRS) and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). This important connection would take place at the very moment when families need these agencies' services the most- when they are in the throes of crisis due to their child's unaccounted absence from home.

In response to evidence of lapses in reporting of missing children to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) as required by federal law, this Act would require law enforcement to certify their compliance with the law. Without an NCIC entry, law enforcement officers are far less able to discover or protect a missing child because law

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enforcement would not know to look for him or her. This process of certification would raise law enforcement's attention to the reporting requirements to NCIC and result in improved reporting practices and a larger number of youth who are found and protected.

National Runaway Safeline and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children offer important crisis intervention, crisis counseling, reunification, and prevention services to children and youth and their families. They are the nation's designated communications systems for runaway and missing children and youth and received federal funding to support their operations.

The National Network for Youth applauds your bipartisan leadership on addressing the holes that exist in systems that seek to prevent, protect and provide safety for America's runaway and homeless children and youth. The Network enthusiastically endorses the *Runaway Reporting Improvement Act of 2013* and looks forward to continue working with U.S. Congress to increase prevention, crisis intervention, and housing services to protect America's runaway and homeless youth.

Respectfully,



Darla Bardine, J.D.
Policy Director, National Network for Youth



Deborah Shore
Board Chair, National Network for Youth
Executive Director, Sasha Bruce Youthwork