

The GRACIE Act

Rep. Ann Wagner (R-MO)

Reps. Elise Stefanik (R-NY), Jared Moskowitz (D-FL), Blake Moore (R-UT), and Burgess Owens (R-UT)

Background

In the United States, an estimated 37.4% of children are interviewed by Child Protective Services (CPS) before the age of 18.¹ Additionally, it is estimated that 60% of all child sex trafficking victims have been involved in the foster care system.²

CPS serves as the gatekeeper to this foster care system, and interview protocols remain outdated throughout the United States. Often, initial interviews are conducted spontaneously at a child's school or home by a social worker, and the child's statements are written down without witnesses or accountability for accuracy.

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) as well as most state-level police departments require recordings of all interrogations or require body cameras. The federal government should support state efforts to implement the same standards for interviews that could change a child's life.

This is both a child protection and a parents' rights issue. Inaccurate or incomplete notes of a child's statements can lead to a potential offense not being properly investigated or prosecuted, and interviewing a child multiple times may cause re-traumatization. For parents, the inaccurate representation of a parent's statements can lead to adverse actions taken against the family without proper cause. Digital recordings of such interviews solves both of these issues.

The GRACIE Act

The GRACIE Act would support state efforts to require and retain the digital recording of all CPS interviews. The bill establishes a program within the HHS Administration for Children and Families to allow eligible entities (CPS agencies in states that have a recording requirement) to apply for funding that may only be used for costs directly and retaining a recording for five years.

Importantly, there is no mandate on states, and no funding is taken away from states that choose not to have a recording requirement. Instead, the bill supports state efforts that enact the requirement.

There is no authorization of additional appropriations for this program, and HHS must use the funds already made available to the Department.

¹ Kim et. al. February 2017. "Lifetime Prevalence of Investigating Child Maltreatment Among US Children." *American Journal of Public Health*.

² National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. <https://www.ncjfcj.org/webcasts/the-disturbing-connection-between-foster-care-and-domestic-child-sex-trafficking/>

The GRACIE Act

Rep. Ann Wagner (R-MO)

Reps. Elise Stefanik (R-NY), Jared Moskowitz (D-FL), Blake Moore (R-UT), and Burgess Owens (R-UT)

Supporting Organizations

1. Street Grace
2. 3Strands Global
3. Ace Community Center
4. ANEW Life
5. Arizona Anti-Trafficking Network
6. Atlanta International Schools
7. AWK Survivor Advocate Attorneys
8. Black Leaders Against Sex Trafficking
9. Bridge 2 Future
10. Campaign Against Human Trafficking (CAHT)
11. Central Missouri Human Trafficking Coalition
12. Chains Interrupted Children's Wellness Center
13. Compassion First
14. CPAC
15. Created for Purpose
16. CRST Tribal Education Agency
17. Empowered Network
18. Engage Together
19. Exodus Cry
20. Families for Families
21. Free Indeed
22. Gracehaven
23. Half A Million Kids
24. HDC Ventures
25. Hoola Na Pua
26. Hope for Justice
27. Institute for Shelter Care
28. Interparliamentary Taskforce on Human Trafficking
29. Lighthouse for Life
30. Love Never Fails
31. Lynn's Warriors
32. Mentari
33. NCOSE
34. No Trafficking Zones
35. One More Child
36. Overcomers on the Move
37. Paso del Norte Center of Hope
38. Paving the Way Foundation
39. Pearl at the Mailbox
40. Porn Free Colorado
41. Protect All Children from Trafficking (PACT)
42. Resiliency Foundation
43. Resolved Strategies
44. Rights 4 Girls
45. Sexual Assault Center
46. SK Sultana
47. Starfish Alliance
48. STSC
49. Survivor Led Solutions
50. The Foundation United
51. The Joseph Project
52. There is Hope for Me
53. Thistle Farms
54. UCF Center for the Study of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery
55. Viable
56. Virginia Coalition Against Human Trafficking
57. Willowbend Farms
58. World Without Exploitation
59. Yellowstone Human Trafficking Taskforce
60. Zimmerman Resources
61. New Jersey Coalition Against Human Trafficking