

will have access to the care and support they need.

I urge my colleagues to vote for H.R. 468, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 468, the Enhancing Services for Runaway and Homeless Victims of Youth Trafficking Act of 2015.

I am honored to join my colleagues, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HECK), the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG), and the chairman of the full committee, Mr. KLINE, and appreciate their leadership on this important issue.

Our bill makes important changes in the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, so that victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking can get more of the help that they need. We know that trafficking and youth homelessness are often affecting the same populations.

Young people that have run away or are homeless are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking, and programs targeted towards the runaway and homeless youth should be simultaneously equipped to support victims of trafficking when there is such an overlap.

Research consistently confirms the correlation between running away and becoming exploited through prostitution. For example, according to a 2006 FBI Uniform Crime Report, girls who run away from their homes, group homes, foster homes, or treatment centers are at high risk of being targeted by a trafficker or becoming exploited.

Street outreach programs were created to provide services to runaway and homeless and street youth who have been subjected to or are at risk of being subjected to sexual abuse. Every year, 25,000 of these young people find shelter as a result of these programs.

The legislation being considered today ensures that street outreach programs can rely on funding already available through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. This allows the Department of Health and Human Services to provide street-based services such as individual assessments, treatment, counseling, or other shelter for runaway and homeless youth who are also victims of trafficking.

Additionally, the bill authorizes States, organizations, and other entities to use runaway and homeless youth research grants for staff training to work with these young victims. Such additional training will allow service providers to successfully address the behavioral and emotional effects of the abuse and assault that these victims endure.

Our bill also enhances training programs so that staff will be able to recognize and respond to the unique needs of trafficking victims. This is a small but important change, one necessary to improve services available.

Updating the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act with this legislation is an

important first step, but it is also important for Congress to consider reauthorizing the entire act, which expired last year.

□ 1630

In the 113th Congress, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved a bipartisan reauthorization bill that would provide other critical support to runaway and homeless youth, including extending time for safe and appropriate shelter, establishing performance standards for assistance programs, strengthening data collection, and ensuring that adequate resources for all runaway and homeless youths are available.

It is my hope that the House can continue the spirit of bipartisanship and comprehensively update the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. Our Nation's most vulnerable youth need us to come together and work together on their behalf.

Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support the legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE), the chairman of the Education and the Workforce Committee.

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding the time and for his consistent, continuous leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, as a father and grandfather, I find it difficult to imagine anything more terrifying than a loved one falling victim to youth sex trafficking. Yet each year, hundreds of thousands of children and families are forced to live with the pain and suffering that stems from this deplorable crime.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. This crime is taking place right here in our own country. It is impacting our communities, our families, and our children. We face a national crisis, and it demands a national response.

Fortunately, there are heroic efforts underway to fight this heinous crime, care for the victims, and support their families.

The dedicated staff at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, or NCMEC, are on the front lines every day identifying victims, assisting law enforcement in the recovery of missing children, and returning children to their loved ones.

NCMEC is also partnering with schools and employers to enhance support for victims and their families. Parents with children in school are probably familiar with Lifetouch photography. Through its SmileSafe Kids initiative, Lifetouch is making it easier for parents and NCMEC to alert law enforcement of a missing child in order to accelerate the search and rescue.

NCMEC and others are always finding new ways to help, and so should we, and that is why we are here today. We have learned too often victims fall

through the cracks of States' child welfare systems. Those who may be runaway or homeless youth do not have access to the full range of services they need.

And believe it or not, due to a flaw in the law, there are times when children are treated as criminals—as criminals, Mr. Speaker—rather than the victims of a violent crime.

Congress has an opportunity to address these challenges and strengthen our support for victims of youth sex trafficking. I want to thank my Republican and Democratic colleagues for working with us on this important effort, including Mr. WALBERG, as I mentioned earlier; the ranking member of the Education and the Workforce Committee, Mr. SCOTT; and Representatives JOE HECK, KAREN BASS, and JOYCE BEATTY.

I am pleased that in the early days of the 114th Congress, we are taking action to address youth sex trafficking. It reflects both the seriousness of this crime and our commitment to the victims and their families.

I urge my colleagues to support these important legislative proposals.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for his statements in support of this legislation, I thank Mr. HECK for sponsoring it, and Mr. KLINE as the leader on this committee.

This is a privilege of service in this body, when we can come together in a bipartisan fashion to do what is right for our country; but, in this case, to do what is right for our defenseless young people, many of whom have been caught into a web that offers nothing but pain and misfortune for the future. To take a stand on this issue, to stand for opportunity, to push back against the dark clouds of crime that prey on young people is something that we can stand together on.

I think we have said significant words in support of this legislation. Now it is time to get to work, and the best way to do that, Mr. Speaker, as you and I both know, is to pass it.

So I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 468, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 468.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

STRENGTHENING CHILD WELFARE RESPONSE TO TRAFFICKING ACT OF 2015

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 469) to amend the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to enable State child protective services

systems to improve the identification and assessment of child victims of sex trafficking, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 469

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act of 2015”.

SEC. 2. CAPTA AMENDMENTS.

Section 106 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5106a) is amended—

- (1) in subsection (b)—
- (A) in paragraph (2)(B)—
- (i) by striking “and” at the end of clause (xxii); and

- (ii) by adding at the end the following:

“(xxiv) provisions and procedures to identify and assess reports involving children who are sex trafficking victims, and which may include provisions and procedures to identify and assess reports involving children who are victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons described in section 103(9)(B) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7102(9)(B));

“(xxv) provisions and procedures for training representatives of the State child protective services systems about identifying and assessing children who are sex trafficking victims, and which may include provisions and procedures for such training with respect to children who are victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons described in section 103(9)(B) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7102(9)(B)); and

“(xxvi) provisions and procedures for identifying services (including the services provided by State law enforcement officials, the State juvenile justice system, and social service agencies, such as runaway and homeless youth shelters) and procedures for appropriate referral to address the needs of children who are sex trafficking victims, and which may include provisions and procedures for the identification of such services and procedures with respect to children who are victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons described in section 103(9)(B) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7102(9)(B));”;

- (B) in paragraph (2)(D)—

- (i) by striking “and” at the end of clause (v);

- (ii) by inserting “and” at the end of clause (vi); and

- (iii) by adding at the end the following:

“(vii) the provisions and procedures described in clauses (xxiv) and (xxvi) of subparagraph (B);”;

- (C) in paragraph (4)—

- (i) by striking “and” at the end of subparagraph (A);

- (ii) by striking the period at the end of subparagraph (B) and inserting “; and”; and

- (iii) by adding at the end the following:

“(C) SEX TRAFFICKING VICTIM.—The term ‘sex trafficking victim’ means a victim of—

“(i) sex trafficking (as defined in section 103(10) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7102(10))); or

“(ii) a severe form of trafficking in persons described in section 103(9)(A) of such Act (22 U.S.C. 7102(9)(A)).”;

- (2) in subsection (d), by adding at the end the following:

“(17) The number of children identified under clause (xxiv) of subsection (b)(2)(B), and of such children—

“(A) the number identified as sex trafficking victims (as defined in subsection (b)(4)(C)); and

“(B) in the case of a State that has provisions and procedures to identify children who are victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons described in section 103(9)(B) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7102(9)(B)), the number so identified.”.

SEC. 3. REPORT TO CONGRESS.

(a) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall submit to the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate, a report that—

(1) describes the specific type and prevalence of severe form of trafficking in persons to which children who are identified for services or intervention under the placement, care, or supervision of State, Indian tribe, or tribal organization child welfare agencies have been subjected as of the date of enactment of this Act;

(2) summarizes the practices and protocols utilized by States to identify and serve—

(A) under section 106(b)(2)(B) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5106a(b)(2)(B)), children who are victims of trafficking; and

(B) children who are at risk of becoming victims of trafficking; and

(3) specifies any barriers in Federal laws or regulations that may prevent identification and assessment of children who are victims of trafficking, including an evaluation of the extent to which States are able to address the needs of such trafficked children without altering the definition of child abuse and neglect under section 3 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5101 note).

(b) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section:

(1) SEVERE FORM OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS.—The term “severe form of trafficking in persons” has the meaning given the term in section 103(9) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7102(9)).

(2) VICTIM OF TRAFFICKING.—The term “victim of trafficking” has the meaning given the term in section 103(15) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (22 U.S.C. 7102(15)).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 469.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, domestic child trafficking is a serious problem, sadly, in the United States. Around 300,000 American youth are at risk of sexual commercial exploitation and traf-

ficking each year. That is why the House of Representatives is considering a number of bills this week that seek to ensure that human trafficking victims are treated as victims and have access to the services they desperately need.

As a Member of Congress, I have worked on legislation to help address this problem in the past and will continue that important work this year. I have also held local roundtables in Michigan with victims, advocacy, and law enforcement groups to do everything I can to work with my communities to address this heinous crime.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimates that 68 percent of likely sex trafficking victims were involved in the child welfare system at one time. Instead of properly identifying and assisting trafficked and exploited children, these children are often sent to the juvenile justice system, where they are labeled and treated as criminals. These innocent victims are victimized by the very system that was designed to protect them.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 469. The Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act of 2015 will help protect child victims by improving practices within State child welfare systems to identify, assess, and document sex trafficking victims. The House passed this legislation by a voice vote last summer, and I thank my colleague, Congresswoman KAREN BASS, for her work on this important legislation again this Congress.

H.R. 469 amends the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to direct States to implement and maintain procedures to identify and assess reports involving children who are victims of sex trafficking.

The bill also requires that States train child protective services workers on how to identify these children and the services necessary to meet their needs, and it would improve reporting on the number of children identified as sex trafficking victims.

Mr. Speaker, this bill requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to report on the type and prevalence of youth trafficking victims in the welfare system, provide a summary of State practices for serving youth trafficking victims, and report on any barriers in Federal law that prevent identification and assessment of youth victims of trafficking.

It is imperative that we continue to pass legislation that helps victims of both labor and sex trafficking, to ensure that victims receive the services they need to escape a life of abuse.

Again, I would like to thank Congresswoman KAREN BASS and Chairman KLINE of the Education and the Workforce Committee for their work on this important bill.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 469, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act of 2015, sponsored by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BASS).

This bill will support victims of child sex trafficking by helping them find services they need, by training child protective services workers to identify cases of child sex trafficking, and by improving data collection on the number of child sex trafficking victims.

This legislation would also require the Department of Health and Human Services to submit a report to Congress that describes the type and prevalence of severe forms of trafficking to which identified victims are subjected.

This bill also summarizes State practices to identify and serve trafficking victims and those at risk of trafficking and describes Federal statutory or regulatory barriers that may prevent child trafficking victims from getting the services they need, including an evaluation of the State's capacity to address such victim's needs.

The bill would also allow the State welfare agencies to include child labor trafficking in their provisions of staff training. Under the bill, if a State includes child labor trafficking in those responsibilities, the States must also collect data on the number of those victims.

The bill is a product of good bipartisan work and diligent negotiations by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BASS) and her staff and Democratic and Republican staffs in the Education and the Workforce Committee.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation, which has the backing of child welfare advocates and will improve services and responses to child trafficking victims.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas, Judge POE, one who understands this process from his time in the court of law as a judge.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time.

This bill, Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act, H.R. 469, is an excellent piece of legislation. As mentioned, it is a bipartisan piece of legislation.

I want to thank KAREN BASS from California and Chairman KLINE from Minnesota for bringing this to the floor.

This is one of many, many pieces of legislation dealing with trafficking that have come and will come to the House floor the rest of today and tomorrow, bipartisan pieces of legislation.

In my short tenure of 10 years here in Congress, I have never seen a subject that had so many people interested on both sides of the aisle and so many pieces of legislation coming to the House floor, all with the purpose of trying to rein in this scourge of human trafficking in the United States.

The public seems to be a little more concerned about other matters than

the issue of trafficking, at least the media does. They spend a lot of time talking about how much air is in footballs when we probably should be dealing with how much criminal activity is taking place in America where America's children are being kidnapped and put into slavery.

One example of this is the bill that Ms. BASS has brought to us, and that is the one regarding child welfare agencies in States.

I understand, Mr. Speaker, that 60 percent of American children involved in human trafficking, somewhere in their background they were in foster care. I am not saying foster care caused that. I am just saying that somewhere they make the route through foster care. We are not doing what we should do in dealing with our children to protect them from this scourge of trafficking.

This legislation goes a long way to help people in States, State government, to take care and make sure that children do not get taken up in this human trafficking that is taking place in the United States.

□ 1645

I come from Houston. Unfortunately, Houston is one of the hubs in the United States for human trafficking. Because of our location in the United States—near an international border—we have not only domestic trafficked victims go through our city but international trafficked victims and their children, their young people.

I want to congratulate Ms. BASS and the House and the leadership of the House for bringing this legislation and legislation like it up to the floor to make sure that America understands and criminals understand America's children are not for sale.

And that is just the way it is.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BASS), the sponsor of the bill and a strong supporter and advocate for foster children.

Ms. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the bipartisan Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act, which I introduced with a group of bipartisan Members of Congress.

The same version of this bill was unanimously passed in the 113th Congress. This legislation demonstrates how critical it is that Members of Congress work together to move policy that protects children from being sexually exploited. The work that both sides of the aisle have done on sex trafficking demonstrates a strong commitment to preventing our most vulnerable populations from becoming victims.

First, I would like to thank Chairman KLINE, Representative WALBERG, and Ranking Member SCOTT for their leadership on continuing to support this legislation that works towards ensuring that no child in the United

States becomes a victim of sex trafficking. I am grateful for their knowledge and assistance that helped bring this important bill to the floor today. I would also like to thank Judge POE for his ongoing leadership on this issue.

My colleague and friend, Representative TOM MARINO, has been a leader in fighting for children in the foster care system. Mr. MARINO, along with the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth cochairs—JIM McDERMOTT, TRENT FRANKS, JIM LANGEVIN, and DIANE BLACK—all served as original cosponsors of H.R. 469 and have demonstrated leadership by both making significant change in the child welfare system and by bringing attention to the horrendous intersection between sex trafficking and our child welfare system.

The U.S. Department of Justice reports that between 2008 and 2010 40 percent of sex trafficking cases involved the exploitation of children. Tragically, many of these children are forgotten without the appropriate services to ensure their safety. This highlights the failure of our system to prevent them from becoming victims.

More than 200,000 youth in our country are at risk of trafficking per year. In my hometown of Los Angeles, the Probation Department reports that 61 percent of identified trafficking victims are foster youth. It is noteworthy that this statistic comes from the Probation Department and not the child welfare department. This legislation hopes to correct that. We want to make sure that child welfare agencies, in addition to juvenile justice, begin to document this problem.

In Los Angeles, we are fortunate to have the STAR Court, which is a specialized, collaborative courthouse designed to serve youth who have been trafficked. The STAR Court team reports that 80 percent of the girls entering their courtroom have previously been involved in the child welfare system.

As cochair of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth, I have had the opportunity to travel throughout the country as part of our Nationwide Listening Tour. Unfortunately, I have heard far too many stories about youth in foster care falling through the cracks in the system. Sometimes they are thought to be runaways. Sadly, they report that no one looked for them and that, in fact, they had not run away but had been abducted or tricked or drugged by a pimp when the system assumed they were bad girls who had just run away.

Most of us were so moved by one woman that we often repeat her story. She told us in hearings that she felt the foster care system prepared her for exploitation because her pimp was the first person who told her that he loved her and that, while in foster care, she was moved so often and told so often that she was just a paycheck that she formed no healthy attachments and had nowhere to turn.

We have to close the cracks in our system that leave a child feeling her

pimp is the only one she can turn to or that she would rather be with a pimp than be bounced around from foster home to foster home. The system that is supposed to be designed to help vulnerable children should not turn around and victimize the children or allow them to fall into the hands of exploiters.

Many of the young survivors we have met told us that, during the time they were being trafficked, they had numerous encounters with the child welfare system but that no one asked what was happening to them, especially girls in group homes. Pimps know this population is especially vulnerable. H.R. 469 will allow child welfare agencies across the Nation to develop State protection plans to outline provisions and procedures to identify and assess all reports of children known or suspected to be victims of sex trafficking.

H.R. 469 begins to prepare the child welfare system for this population. A first step is to document the extent of the problem. Another step is to ensure that each State has a plan to train social workers to identify and address the needs of this population. Arresting these children should not be the way we provide services. Arresting them treats them as criminals, and one has to question if jail is ever an appropriate place to provide the type of services these children need.

H.R. 469 also requires that, within 1 year, the Department of Health and Human Services report to Congress on the prevalence and type of trafficking they have encountered. The report will assess State practices used to identify and serve trafficking victims and Federal laws and policies that might, in fact, prevent States from supporting these victims, including the absence of trafficking in the Federal definition of "child abuse and neglect" under CAPTA, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.

I am encouraged by the momentum that has been created to reform our child welfare system and to ensure that vulnerable children are provided with the resources they need. I strongly urge my colleagues to support H.R. 469, the Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act, and to continue to work together in Congress to combat domestic minor sex trafficking.

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Missouri, Congresswoman WAGNER, an aggressive and outspoken advocate for children since arriving here in Congress, an opponent of trafficking, and who has much to say but who also has had much evidence of action on this issue.

Mrs. WAGNER. I thank the gentleman for yielding and for his leadership on this issue.

I also want to thank Judge POE, who has fought this fight for so very many years.

It is marvelous to have seen in the 113th Congress five pieces of legislation on human trafficking move through

this Chamber. Now, tomorrow, we will pass 12 pieces of human trafficking to end the scourge of sex slavery in this country and beyond, and I could not be more proud of this Chamber and of the bipartisan effort to get this done.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 469, the Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act of 2015, sponsored by Representative KAREN BASS.

Congresswoman BASS has been a long-time leader in Congress on the issue of human trafficking. Her legislation will strengthen the child welfare response to trafficking by ensuring that each State develops a plan that would identify children at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking. According to the Department of Justice, upwards of 300,000 American children are at risk of becoming the victims of crime.

One of the greatest challenges we face in combating this problem is a lack of accurate and reliable statistics. Frequently, those most at risk of falling victim to human trafficking are not identified early enough to intervene. By ensuring that child welfare agencies have systems in place to properly identify, to assess, and to document child victims of trafficking, H.R. 469 will move us towards a comprehensive, total solution to the scourge of human trafficking in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to be sponsoring, at the end of our debate here, a Special Order on the issue of human trafficking. I invite all of my colleagues to join me on the floor as we talk about this important issue and about the 12 pieces of human trafficking legislation that will come forward tomorrow.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER), who, in arriving here just this term, has rolled up his sleeves and has already taken aggressive action on issues that make a difference.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. I thank the gentleman from Michigan for yielding this time and for his efforts in this most noble fight.

I rise today, Mr. Speaker, in support of H.R. 469, the Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act of 2015, which directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop and publish guidelines to assist State child welfare agencies in efforts to serve youth who are victims or who are, perhaps, most importantly, at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking. In addition, this bill amends the Foster Care and Adoption Assistance Act to require a State plan for foster care and adoption assistance to identify children who are victims of human trafficking.

Mr. Speaker, as the father of three sons and as the grandfather of precious, precious twin granddaughters,

nothing terrifies me more than the thought of a loved one's falling victim to human sex trafficking. However, families all across our country suffer this horrific situation every day. I believe all of my colleagues would agree that protecting every child in this country is our number one priority; yet children in State welfare systems slip through the cracks and go unnoticed every day.

In the Georgia General Assembly, where I had the honor and privilege of serving for the past 10 years, I worked alongside my friend, State Senator Renee Unterman, to enact one of the Nation's toughest crackdowns on human trafficking by strengthening protections for the victims of these crimes and by increasing penalties for those who commit them. In fact, last year, we went a step further by requiring businesses to post information on a 24-hour, toll-free hotline for victims of human trafficking so that they could call for help.

I hope the guidelines that have been established under this law will encourage other States to follow Georgia's lead. Our utmost priority should be providing to these children, who have suffered at the hands of evil, access to care and support. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I would like to thank the chief sponsor and other supporters of the legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the remainder of my time.

I think much has been said today that causes us to understand that what we are dealing with in this bill is the fact that there are entities that are supposed to be protecting children, that are supposed to be providing resources—law enforcement and welfare and human service entities—that are missing the mark. A lot of that comes from inadequate recordkeeping statistics and from the lack of knowledge of how this is having the greatest impact in negative ways on children's lives. We would do very well today to follow the advice and direction from speakers who have already spoken on this issue.

Pass this legislation, and provide further hope for children caught in the trap of human trafficking and enslavement that comes from this crime. I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 469.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act of 2015. I would like to thank my friend and colleague, Congresswoman KAREN BASS, for introducing this bill and for all she does on behalf of foster youth.

As an original cosponsor of this bill and a co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth, I encourage all my colleagues to support this important legislation. In the previous Congress, similar legislation passed the

House by a vote of 399–0—a strong show of support for foster youth.

Foster youth are some of the most at-risk children in our society. They are often the victims of abuse or neglect; and too many face trials and tribulations beyond their years. So much that we take for granted—a stable home, living with our siblings, or returning to the same school year after year—are constant obstacles for these children.

This legislation will specifically address the link between girls in foster care and sex trafficking, and will require states to develop a child protection plan to identify and assess all reports involving children known or suspected to be victims of trafficking. Additionally, states must provide training plans for child protective services workers to appropriately respond to reports of child trafficking and have procedures in place that will connect child victims to public or private specialized services.

I am proud to support this bipartisan legislation, and again I urge all my colleagues to support this bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 469.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Ms. BASS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

MISSING CHILDREN'S ASSISTANCE ACT AMENDMENT

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 246) to improve the response to victims of child sex trafficking.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 246

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. RESPONSE TO VICTIMS OF CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING.

Section 404(b)(1)(P)(iii) of the Missing Children's Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5773(b)(1)(P)(iii)) is amended by striking "child prostitution" and inserting "child sex trafficking, including child prostitution".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

□ 1700

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 246.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 246, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today, the House of Representatives continues its commitment to bolstering enforcement efforts against human traffickers in the United States and ensuring that we properly identify and serve victims.

I want to thank Congresswoman JOYCE BEATTY for her leadership on this issue and for introducing H.R. 246, which will improve the ability of law enforcement officials and others to respond to and assist these victims.

The House voted 409–0 to pass this legislation last summer, and as previous House efforts have done, the bills being considered today attempt to change for the better how we view victims.

For too long, these victims have been seen as willing participants and treated as actors in the criminal scheme; however, we now know that, oftentimes, individuals are trapped as victims by human trafficking organizations and, sadly, many of these victims are children.

Congresswoman BEATTY's legislation will ensure that we view victims of sex trafficking not as participants, but as victims, and ensure that child sex trafficking crimes are reported.

Under current law, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children operates the CyberTipline to provide online users and electronic service providers a means of reporting Internet-related child sexual exploitation in many areas, including child prostitution.

H.R. 246 would replace the term "child prostitution" with "child sex trafficking" in the CyberTipline reporting categories to reinforce that children who are sex-trafficked or sexually exploited are victims whose situation should be taken seriously when reported.

It would also ensure the public recognizes that child prostitution is included in how NCMEC uses the term "child sex trafficking" and thus should still be reported to the CyberTipline.

Again, I want to thank Congresswoman BEATTY, along with the Education and the Workforce Committee and House leadership for recognizing the need to steadfastly address this dreadful practice.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 246, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 246, a bill to improve the response to victims of child sex trafficking.

The bipartisan bill, sponsored by the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. BEATTY), would amend the Missing Children's Assistance Act by adding the term "child sex trafficking" to the list of items which may be reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's CyberTipline.

Under the act, the center operates the CyberTipline to allow online users and electronic service providers a way of reporting Internet-related child sexual exploitation, including child prostitution.

The term "trafficking" more accurately describes the circumstances by which children are sexually exploited and reinforces the notion that they are victims, not criminals. Adding trafficking to the list of items that may be reported to the center will not only help the center continue its outstanding work of finding and helping victims, but it will also help experts in the field of missing and exploited children better understand the nature and extent of the problem.

I am grateful to the gentlewoman from Ohio for introducing this important legislation, and I appreciate her partnership with the majority, including the chairman of the full Committee on Education and the Workforce, Chairman KLINE; the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG); and other sponsors.

I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. BEATTY), the sponsor of the legislation.

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 246, a bipartisan bill I introduced which will help victims of child sex trafficking by decriminalizing their behavior.

First, I would like to thank Chairman KLINE from Minnesota and Ranking Member SCOTT from Virginia of the Education and the Workforce Committee for bringing this important bill to the floor for consideration.

I want to also thank Representative WALBERG, who is managing the bill, for his kind words and his leadership. He is managing the bill today for the Republicans. I also thank Congresswoman KAREN BASS and Congresswoman ANN WAGNER for their leadership and support.

Also, I would like to thank Senator PORTMAN, who I partnered with on this issue last Congress and who introduced the companion legislation in the Senate. I look forward to working with him again during the 114th Congress to advance this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, last Congress, the House passed this exact bill unanimously by a vote of 409–0. Today, I hope that my colleagues in the House will again approve this legislation with overwhelming bipartisan support so we can better assist victims of child sex trafficking and ensure they are viewed and treated as victims, not criminals.

Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to participate in Ohio's sixth annual Human Trafficking Awareness Day, which was held in my district at the Ohio statehouse. It was standing