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(Original Signature of Member)

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to update and strengthen existing efforts to end violence against children, improve coordination among agencies addressing this violence, and promote the use of evidence-based strategies and critical information gathering capabilities, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. MCGOVERN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to update and strengthen existing efforts to end violence against children, improve coordination among agencies addressing this violence, and promote the use of evidence-based strategies and critical information gathering capabilities, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Strengthening Efforts
3 to End Violence Against Children Act of 2023”.

4 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING VIOLENCE**
5 **AGAINST CHILDREN SURVEYS.**

6 It is the sense of Congress that—

7 (1) Violence Against Children Surveys (VACS)
8 are critical tools for realizing the objectives of the
9 “Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Ad-
10 versity: U.S. Government Strategy for International
11 Assistance, 2019–2023” for—

12 (A) building strong beginnings for vulner-
13 able children through early childhood develop-
14 ment interventions;

15 (B) strengthening families and advancing
16 positive parenting; and

17 (C) protecting children from violence; and

18 (2) when leveraging the findings of a VACS,
19 relevant bureaus and offices should consider wheth-
20 er—

21 (A) governments have fully committed to
22 the process of conducting the survey;

23 (B) there is presence and capacity amongst
24 partner entities in-country to support imple-
25 mentation of the survey;

1 (C) there is availability of funding to both
2 implement the survey and support Centers for
3 Disease Control technical assistance for imple-
4 mentation; and

5 (D) governments have expressed support
6 for action in response to survey findings, such
7 as demonstrating the ability to mobilize re-
8 sources and having funding in place for pro-
9 grams and services.

10 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

11 It is the policy of the United States to—

12 (1) promote, fund, and support the protection
13 of children from violence, exploitation, abuse, and
14 neglect by investing in preventative and responsive
15 programming care in relevant foreign assistance pro-
16 grams; and

17 (2) rely on evidence-based, efficient, and effec-
18 tive interventions in strategies and programs to sup-
19 port vulnerable children, promote permanent family
20 care, and protect children from violence, exploi-
21 tation, and abuse.

22 **SEC. 4. ASSISTANCE FOR CHILDREN IN ADVERSITY.**

23 Section 135 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961
24 (22 U.S.C. 2152f) is amended—

1 (1) by adding at the end of subsection (a) the
2 following:

3 “(10) Exposure to sexual, physical, and emo-
4 tional violence, particularly when such exposure is
5 repeated or chronic, can significantly affect a child’s
6 brain development and function and cause life-long
7 consequences, including poor mental health, hindered
8 neurological development, slowed physical develop-
9 ment, reduced learning, and risky health behavior,
10 continuing cycles of poverty, and epigenetic con-
11 sequences.

12 “(11) Child protection interventions can be life-
13 saving, especially in such critical circumstances as
14 humanitarian responses, regions experiencing fra-
15 gility, and conflict areas.

16 “(12) The Violence Against Children Surveys
17 are critical tools in partnering with foreign govern-
18 ments to analyze violence against children and in
19 creating action plans to address this violence and
20 protect vulnerable children.”;

21 (2) by adding at the end of subsection (b) the
22 following:

23 “(6) VULNERABLE CHILDREN.—The term ‘vul-
24 nerable children’ means children who are experi-

1 encing conditions of serious deprivation and danger,
2 including those who—

3 “(A) are living outside of family care;

4 “(B) have been trafficked;

5 “(C) are experiencing violence;

6 “(D) are experiencing labor or sexual ex-
7 ploitation;

8 “(E) are affected by, or are emerging
9 from, armed conflict or humanitarian crises;

10 “(F) have disabilities;

11 “(G) are orphans; or

12 “(H) are otherwise vulnerable, including
13 because of HIV/AIDS, acute illness, or having
14 been born prematurely.”; and

15 (3) in subsection (c)—

16 (A) in paragraph (6), by striking “; and”
17 and inserting a semicolon;

18 (B) in paragraph (7), by striking the pe-
19 riod at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

20 (C) by adding at the end the following:

21 “(8) to support nurturing, protective, and per-
22 manent family care for vulnerable children and to
23 extend protective services to children living outside
24 of family care;

1 “(9) to promote the protection of children from
2 violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect by investing
3 in preventative and responsive programming built
4 upon evidence-based strategies; and

5 “(10) to provide lifesaving protection and inter-
6 ventions for vulnerable children in emergency set-
7 tings and fragile contexts.”.

8 **SEC. 5. AMENDMENTS TO THE ASSISTANCE FOR ORPHANS**
9 **AND OTHER VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN DE-**
10 **VELOPING COUNTRIES ACT.**

11 The Assistance for Orphans and Other Vulnerable
12 Children in Developing Countries Act of 2005 (Public Law
13 109–95) is amended as follows:

14 (1) In section 4 (22 U.S.C. 2152f note)—

15 (A) by amending subsection (a) to read as
16 follows:

17 “(a) **REQUIREMENT FOR STRATEGY.—**

18 “(1) **INITIAL SUBMISSION.—**Not later than 180
19 days after the date of the enactment of the
20 Strengthening Efforts to End Violence Against Chil-
21 dren Act of 2023, the President shall develop and
22 submit to the appropriate congressional committees
23 a strategy for coordinating, implementing, and moni-
24 toring assistance programs for children in adversity

1 under section 135 of the Foreign Assistance Act of
2 1961.

3 “(2) COMMENT AND REVIEW.—The strategy re-
4 quired by paragraph (1) shall not be implemented
5 before the date that is 90 days after the date of the
6 submission of the strategy. During such 90-day pe-
7 riod, the President shall consider and, if appropriate,
8 revise, such strategy in light of any comments pro-
9 vided to the President by the appropriate congress-
10 sional committees.

11 “(3) IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE.—Subject to
12 revisions in accordance with paragraph (2), the
13 President shall begin implementation of the strategy
14 required by paragraph (1) not later than 150 days
15 after the date of the submission of the strategy.

16 “(4) REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION.—Every 4
17 years, the President shall submit to the appropriate
18 congressional committees—

19 “(A) a review of the manner and extent to
20 which the strategy required by paragraph (1)
21 has been implemented during the preceding 4
22 years; and

23 “(B) an updated strategy, incorporating
24 the findings of such review, for the subsequent
25 4 years.”;

1 (B) by amending subsection (b) to read as
2 follows:

3 “(b) CONSULTATION.—

4 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The strategy described in
5 subsection (a)(1) shall be developed by the Special
6 Advisor for Assistance to Orphans and Vulnerable
7 Children (appointed pursuant to section 135(e)(1) of
8 the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961), in consultation
9 with the appropriate consulting partners listed in
10 paragraph (2), to ensure that the strategy—

11 “(A) will not impede the efficiency of im-
12 plementing assistance programs for orphans
13 and vulnerable children;

14 “(B) addresses the specific needs of local
15 populations; and

16 “(C) is fully implemented.

17 “(2) APPROPRIATE CONSULTING PARTNERS.—

18 The appropriate consulting partners listed in this
19 paragraph are—

20 “(A) relevant offices in the Department of
21 Health and Human Services, Department of
22 Labor, Department of State, PEPFAR, and the
23 Peace Corps;

24 “(B) United States civil society stake-
25 holders, including service providers; and

1 “(C) employees of the field missions of the
2 United States Agency for International Devel-
3 opment.”; and

4 (C) by adding at the end the following:

5 “(c) PUBLICATION.—The strategy required by sub-
6 section (a)(1) and each review of the implementation of
7 such strategy required by subsection (a)(4) shall be made
8 publicly available.”.

9 (2) In section 5(b) (22 U.S.C. 2152g(b))—

10 (A) by striking paragraph (1);

11 (B) by redesignating paragraphs (2)
12 through (4) as paragraphs (1) through (3), re-
13 spectively; and

14 (C) by adding at the end the following:

15 “(4) The activities of the United States Agency
16 for International Development, the Department of
17 Health and Human Services, the Department of
18 Labor, the Department of State, PEPFAR, and the
19 Peace Corps that implement INSPIRE strategies for
20 ending violence against children, which include—

21 “(A) implementation and enforcement of
22 law;

23 “(B) norms and values;

24 “(C) safe environments;

25 “(D) parent and caregiver support;

1 “(E) income and economic strengthening;

2 “(F) response and support services; and

3 “(G) education and life skills.

4 “(5) The manner and extent to which Federal
5 departments and agencies and partner organizations
6 have used findings from Violence Against Children
7 Surveys to inform programming to support, care for,
8 and protect children in adversity.”.

9 **SEC. 6. IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CHILDREN IN**
10 **ADVERSITY.**

11 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of the United
12 States Agency for International Development, acting
13 through the Special Advisor for Children in Adversity,
14 shall include in the first report submitted pursuant to sec-
15 tion 5 of the Assistance for Orphans and Other Vulnerable
16 Children in Developing Countries Act of 2005 (22 U.S.C.
17 2152g) after the date of the enactment of this Act a report
18 on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violence
19 against children globally.

20 (b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The report re-
21 quired under subsection (a) shall also include the following
22 elements:

23 (1) An assessment of the impact of the
24 COVID-19 pandemic on violence against children
25 and child protection risks, including domestic vio-

1 lence, child trafficking, child marriage, female gen-
2 ital mutilation/cutting, and sexual exploitation, espe-
3 cially as these forms of violence affect marginalized
4 children and youth, such as girls, LGBTQ children
5 and youth, children with disabilities, and other mi-
6 nority populations.

7 (2) An overview of programs being carried out
8 by participants in the Advancing Protection and
9 Care for Children in Adversity Interagency Working
10 Group to continue investments in child protection,
11 child safeguarding, social-service workforce strength-
12 ening, positive parenting, and family strengthening
13 programming during the COVID–19 pandemic, in-
14 cluding existing data on funding and programmatic
15 focus disaggregated by gender, country, income level,
16 and disability.

17 (3) Descriptions of the effectiveness, cost, and
18 accessibility of the tools and strategies most com-
19 monly used to minimize child protection risks and
20 mitigate service disruptions during the COVID–19
21 pandemic.

22 (4) Identification of any gaps in reaching
23 marginalized populations with child protection infor-
24 mation and services during the COVID–19 pan-

1 demic, such as girls, children with disabilities, or
2 children affected by conflict and crisis.

3 (5) Descriptions of the tools and resources
4 needed for the Agency to contribute to long-term re-
5 covery of children's protection and well-being in the
6 wake of COVID-19 including distance learning
7 interventions, safe school reopening guidelines, and
8 reenrollment campaigns for out-of-school children
9 and youth.

10 (c) FORM.—The report required by subsection (a)
11 shall be submitted in unclassified form and made available
12 to the public.