



**U.S. Catholic Sisters  
Against Human Trafficking**  
*Ending Slavery Is Everyone's Work*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 9.29.2020**

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**Catholics Call on Attorney General Barr to Protect Children from Online Trafficking**  
*Petition with Over 1200 Signatures Sent to the Department of Justice*

**St. Louis, MO:** U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT), a national faith-based network working to end human trafficking and support survivors, submitted a petition today with over 1200 signatures from supporters all over the country, calling on Attorney General Barr to do his job in relation to the Protect Our Children Act of 2008.

The Protect Our Children Act of 2008 focuses on preventing online child exploitation and prosecuting those responsible for this crime. This legislation requires a strategic and coordinated campaign across many jurisdictions so that offenders can be identified and children can be protected from stalking and other forms of harmful abuse. The Attorney General's role with respect to this legislation is to review, update, and implement strategies every two years that are necessary to support the effectiveness of our nation's response to online exploitation of children. However, this is not happening.

USCSAHT Executive Director, Jennifer Reyes Lay, said: "We all have a role to play in ending modern day slavery through prevention, protection, prosecution, and rehabilitation. We take our role seriously in informing the public about this crime, advocating for stronger protections, and providing direct support to survivors. The Department of Justice and Attorney General Barr are currently failing in their role to fully enforce and recommend funding for laws that help protect vulnerable populations and prosecute those responsible for trafficking, and we must hold them accountable. Their inattention to this crisis has left our children at higher risk for becoming victims of this horrible crime."

As children have returned to school, many through virtual learning, their increased time spent online and on their electronic devices puts them at greater risk of being contacted by traffickers looking to exploit them. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported a 400% increase in reports of online child abuse and exploitation from April 2019 to April 2020, partially attributed to increased time online due to the pandemic. If we are to be effective in protecting our children from online predators, the Attorney General must assume his full responsibilities under the Protect our Children Act of 2008.

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