



BILL NO: HB 1146
COMMITTEE: Courts of Justice
SESSION: 2024 Regular Session
POSITION: SUPPORT

To the Honorable Chair and Esteemed Members of the Courts of Justice Committee:

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) submits this letter in support of House Bill 1146, legislation that will authorize child victims of abduction—and their families—to receive statutory access to the same vital address confidentiality protections that are available to other crime victims of trauma and abuse under *Va. Code Ann. § 2.2-515.2*.

The General Assembly has been proactive on missing and exploited child protection issues, and an early adopter of address confidentiality safeguards. In 2007, the legislature created the address confidentiality program for victims of domestic violence and expanded the statute to enable victims of stalking (2014) and victims of sexual violence (2017) to enroll. Administered by the Office of the Attorney General, the Commonwealth's address confidentiality program currently provides important services to enrollees, including:

- (1) shielding enrollee addresses from public disclosure;
- (2) providing substitute addresses for enrollees;
- (3) providing mail forwarding; and
- (4) accepting service of process on behalf of enrollees.

Abduction is a traumatic form of victimization for children. Similar to victims of domestic violence, sexual offenses, and stalking, child abduction survivors endure years of trauma from the victimization suffered at the hands of their abductors. Child victims of abduction may live in persistent fear that their abductors will locate and take them again. Because the most common form of abduction is a family abduction, the fear that an estranged family member could use public records to locate, contact and harm the child is very real. Address confidentiality is particularly useful in cases of family abduction where the abductor or estranged family members close to the abductor might initiate unwanted contact with a child survivor and retraumatize the child.

HB 1146 empowers child victims of abduction—and their families—to rebuild their lives using the protections by ensuring that perpetrators can no longer use public resources to locate, harass and harm them. Enactment of this legislation will:

- 1) Place Virginia among the nation's leaders in address confidentiality protections. Jurisdictions across the country are adapting to the emerging needs of child victims and the devastating impact of abduction on children and families. Since 2022, nine (9) States enacted address confidentiality program amendments with specific provisions to enable abduction/kidnapping victims to enroll.¹
- 2) Result in minimal fiscal impact. Authorizing child victims of abduction to enroll in the Address Confidentiality Program will have *minimal* to *no* fiscal impact on the State budget but will have an inestimable positive impact on the peace of mind of these child victims.

In light of the unique needs of child victims of abduction and their families and the existing services provided by the Address Confidentiality Program, NCMEC respectfully requests a favorable committee report for HB 1146.

Respectfully submitted,

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¹ California (AB 243); Connecticut HB ([S253](#)); Maine ([LD1943](#)); Nebraska ([LB691](#)); New York ([S7664](#)); Oklahoma ([SB1569](#)); Pennsylvania ([SB1179](#)); Rhode Island ([S2659](#)); Texas (HB 1161)