

**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
TO H.R. 2426
OFFERED BY MR. SMITH OF MISSOURI**

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

1 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

2 This Act may be cited as the “Find and Protect Fos-
3 ter Youth Act”.

**4 SEC. 2. ELIMINATING OBSTACLES TO IDENTIFYING AND RE-
5 SPONDING TO REPORTS OF CHILDREN MISS-
6 ING FROM FOSTER CARE AND OTHER VUL-
7 NERABLE FOSTER YOUTH.**

8 Section 476 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.
9 676) is amended by adding at the end the following:

10 “(f) EVALUATION OF PROTOCOLS RELATING TO
11 CHILDREN MISSING FROM FOSTER CARE AND OTHER
12 VULNERABLE YOUTH; TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—

13 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall con-
14 duct an evaluation of the protocols established by
15 States in accordance with the requirements of sec-
16 tion 471(a)(35) and, to the extent applicable, by In-
17 dian tribes or tribal organizations (as defined in sec-
18 tion 479B(a)) or tribal consortia with a plan ap-

1 proved under section 471 in accordance with section
2 479B.

3 “(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The evaluation shall in-
4 clude the following:

5 “(A) A review of relevant aspects of re-
6 ports submitted by States, Indian tribes, tribal
7 organizations, and tribal consortia under this
8 part and part B, and data and other informa-
9 tion reported pursuant to the system estab-
10 lished under section 479.

11 “(B) Analysis of the extent to which
12 States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and
13 tribal consortia comply with, and enforce, the
14 protocols required by section 471(a)(35).

15 “(C) Analysis of the effectiveness of such
16 protocols.

17 “(D) Identification of obstacles for States,
18 Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal
19 consortia to identifying and responding to re-
20 ports of children missing from foster care and
21 other vulnerable foster youth.

22 “(E) Identification of best practices for
23 identifying such children and youth and inter-
24 vening with effective services.

1 “(3) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary
2 shall provide States, Indian tribes, tribal organiza-
3 tions, and tribal consortia with information, advice,
4 educational materials, and technical assistance relat-
5 ing to eliminating identified obstacles to identifying
6 and responding to reports of children missing from
7 foster care and other vulnerable foster youth and
8 providing such children and youth with effective
9 services. Such assistance may include dissemination
10 of—

11 “(A) processes and tools to identify and
12 examine risk factors and potential trends re-
13 lated to children who go missing from foster
14 care and other vulnerable youth;

15 “(B) best practices for runaway tracking
16 and recovery; and

17 “(C) guidelines for intervention, including
18 with respect to services, types of providers, and
19 placement settings.

20 “(4) REPORT.—Not later than 5 years after the
21 date of enactment of this subsection, the Secretary
22 shall submit a report to Congress on the results of
23 the evaluation conducted under this subsection and
24 the technical assistance provided in accordance with
25 paragraph (3).”.

1 **SEC. 3. IMPROVING SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT OF**
2 **CHILDREN RETURNED TO FOSTER CARE**
3 **AFTER GOING MISSING TO DETERMINE**
4 **WHETHER THEY WERE, OR ARE AT RISK OF**
5 **BECOMING, VICTIMS OF SEX TRAFFICKING.**

6 Section 476 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.
7 676), as amended by section 2, is further amended by add-
8 ing at the end the following:

9 “(g) IMPROVING IDENTIFICATION OF, AND SERVICES
10 FOR, CHILDREN WHO RETURN TO FOSTER CARE AFTER
11 RUNNING AWAY OR OTHERWISE BEING ABSENT FROM
12 FOSTER CARE AND WHO ARE, OR ARE AT RISK OF
13 BEING, VICTIMS OF SEX TRAFFICKING.—

14 “(1) ASSISTANCE.—

15 “(A) SCREENING AFTER A RETURN TO
16 FOSTER CARE.—The Secretary shall provide
17 States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and
18 tribal consortia, with information, advice, edu-
19 cational materials, and technical assistance to
20 improve compliance with section
21 471(a)(35)(A)(iii).

22 “(B) IMPROVING OTHER REQUIRE-
23 MENTS.—The information, advice, educational
24 materials, and technical assistance provided
25 may include information, advice, educational
26 materials, and technical assistance to improve

1 or modify policies and procedures (including rel-
2 evant training for caseworkers) developed by
3 States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and
4 tribal consortia under section 471(a)(9)(C), in-
5 cluding the following:

6 “(i) Identifying, through screening,
7 whether the State has reasonable cause to
8 believe the child or youth is, or is at risk
9 of being, a victim of sex trafficking.

10 “(ii) Documenting the results of such
11 screening in agency records.

12 “(iii) Determining appropriate serv-
13 ices for a child or youth for whom the
14 State determines there is reasonable cause
15 to identify the child or youth as a victim
16 of sex trafficking, or as at risk of being a
17 victim of sex trafficking.

18 “(iv) Documenting in agency records
19 the determination of appropriate services
20 for a child or youth described in clause
21 (iii).

22 “(2) FORMS OF ASSISTANCE.—The assistance
23 provided under this subsection shall include the fol-
24 lowing:

1 “(A) Assisting States, Indian tribes, tribal
2 organizations, and tribal consortia, with devel-
3 oping oversight mechanisms to assess their
4 compliance with section 471(a)(35)(A)(iii).

5 “(B) Assisting States, Indian tribes, tribal
6 organizations, and tribal consortia in devel-
7 oping—

8 “(i) assessments for screening chil-
9 dren who return to foster care after run-
10 ning away or otherwise being absent from
11 foster care for risk of becoming victims of
12 sex trafficking; and

13 “(ii) effective and robust policies re-
14 lating to the use of the assessments.

15 “(C) Working with States, Indian tribes,
16 tribal organizations, and tribal consortia to im-
17 prove or modify policies and procedures devel-
18 oped under section 471(a)(9)(C).

19 “(D) Providing technical assistance on how
20 States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and
21 tribal consortia may best use data collected pur-
22 suant to section 479 for oversight of, and to en-
23 sure compliance with, the requirements of para-
24 graphs (9)(C) and (35)(A)(iii) of section
25 471(a).

1 “(3) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall, to
2 the extent practicable, consult with internal and ex-
3 ternal offices with expertise on sex trafficking, in-
4 cluding the Office on Trafficking in Persons of the
5 Administration for Children and Families, on the de-
6 velopment and dissemination to States, Indian
7 tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal consortia of
8 the assistance required under this subsection.”.

9 **SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

10 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-
11 retary such sums as are necessary to carry out this Act
12 for fiscal year 2024, which shall remain available through
13 fiscal year 2027.

14 **SEC. 5. IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING CONDITIONS THAT**
15 **LEAD TO YOUTH RUNNING AWAY FROM FOS-**
16 **TER CARE.**

17 The Comptroller General of the United States shall
18 submit to the Congress a written report that—

19 (1) contains a rigorous analysis of administra-
20 tive data to determine the characteristics of youth
21 who run away from foster care and other relevant
22 information about foster care runaway episodes;

23 (2) includes information from interviews with
24 recent foster youth runaways regarding their reasons
25 for running away and what happened after they ran

1 away, including any screening or other protocol fol-
2 lowed by the State;

3 (3) includes a systematic review of research and
4 evidence related to foster youth runaways;

5 (4) sets forth best practices for making foster
6 care safe for youth and reducing the number of fos-
7 ter youth runaways; and

8 (5) makes recommendations to advance child
9 welfare practices, after convening and consulting
10 with a group of child welfare practitioners and pro-
11 fessionals to inform the recommendations.

