



June 21, 2021

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
125 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 appropriations, we write to respectfully request that you work to ensure that the Department of Justice (DOJ) implements the Ashanti Alert Act of 2018 (Pub L. 115-401), and that this effort is fully funded in FY 2022. We appreciate that the Subcommittee included \$1 million for Ashanti Alert Network funding in the FY21 spending bill, and we were pleased that President Biden, too, has recognized the importance of the Ashanti Alert in his proposed budget for FY22.

On December 31, 2018, the Ashanti Alert Act was signed into law, after it passed both the Senate and the House of Representatives with strong bipartisan support. The law requires DOJ to establish a national communications network, named the Ashanti Alert, to assist regional and local search efforts for certain missing adults. In addition, the Ashanti Alert Act requires the Attorney General to designate a national coordinator to work with states to establish Ashanti Alert systems and to develop voluntary guidelines that states (as well as territories) should use in creating their networks.

In the FY20 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 116-93), Congress directed DOJ to report on both the status of its Ashanti Alert Act implementation efforts, as well as establish a deadline for final implementation no later than March 19, 2020.<sup>1</sup> While DOJ has not yet fully implemented the program, we are glad to see recent progress. The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), which administers the Ashanti Alert program, is assisting various states with their existing alert programs for missing adults in an effort to ensure the programs are consistent with national Ashanti Alert guidance. Additionally, BJA is encouraging all other states, territories, and tribes to adopt Ashanti Alert plans and has identified states and tribes to serve as possible

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<sup>1</sup> Rep. Nita Lowey, "Explanatory Statement Submitted by Mrs. Lowey, Chairwoman of the House Committee on Appropriations Regarding H.R. 1158, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020," *Congressional Record*, vol. 165, no. 204 – Book II, (December 17, 2019), p. H10966.

pilot sites for enhancing Ashanti alerting capabilities. Two states, including Virginia, have adopted formal Ashanti Alert programs.

This law was borne out of the tragic death of Ashanti Billie, a 19 year old who was abducted in Norfolk, Virginia and whose body was discovered 11 days after she was first reported missing. Because Ashanti was too old for an Amber Alert to be issued and no similar network for adults existed at the time, her parents, family, and friends struggled to get word out of her disappearance in a timely fashion.

Thus, it is imperative that the Ashanti Alert Act receives full funding and the Department fully implement it in order to advance its goals of transforming the lives and safety of Americans. Full funding ensures that DOJ, law enforcement agencies, and relevant entities and stakeholders have the necessary resources to implement the Ashanti Alert network effectively at the soonest possible date.

We appreciate the Subcommittee's past support for the Ashanti Alert Act, and efforts made by Subcommittee staff to ensure implementation. We hope the Subcommittee will continue to demonstrate strong support for the Ashanti Alert Act for FY 2022.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



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Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



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Tim Kaine  
United States Senator