



## **Gen Justice releases new issue brief, “Disappearing and Dying: Why 20,000 kids disappear from foster care every year and how to end this crisis.”**

Jan. 19, 2021

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PHOENIX – The number of children who have disappeared from the nation’s foster care system has more than doubled in the past six years, according to a just-released Gen Justice issue brief. In [Disappearing and Dying](#), Gen Justice founder Darcy Olsen and chief counsel Rebecca Masterson detail this national crisis and recommend reforms for lawmakers.

“The fact is there is little effort to locate missing foster children and even less hope of recovering them,” said Masterson.

On an average day, 55 children disappear from the U.S. foster care system. An unknown number of the missing are taken and trafficked by pedophiles. Other missing children are killed, like Anaiyah Walker of Arizona, whose body was found on a Phoenix freeway last year.

Traffickers know that children who go missing from foster care probably will not be searched for, a fact shared before Congress by Withelma Pettigrew, who went missing from foster care when she was ten years old. Kidnapped by a predator, he raped, beat, and sold her for sex. “No one looks for us,” Pettigrew testified. “I really want to make this clear. No one looks for us.” Thanks in part to Pettigrew’s testimony, federal law in 2014 required states to report children missing from care. But for most foster children, searches still are either non-existent or totally ineffective.

“Foster children are in the legal care and custody of the state,” said Olsen, a ten-time foster mom, “The state has a responsibility to find these children.”

The single most helpful tool in recovering a missing child is a recent photograph, according to law enforcement, but many foster kids don’t have one. Arizona State Sen. Nancy Barto has introduced a bipartisan measure to

ensure that every child in state care has a current photo card for free, and a parallel reform to ensure children in state custody have an attorney to enforce the law and hold government accountable.

### About Gen Justice

Gen Justice is an award-winning charitable organization celebrating its third year working to mend the broken child protection system through nonpartisan policy changes and a pro bono Children's Law Clinic. Online: [genjustice.org](http://genjustice.org)

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