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**Report to Congress on
Department of State Efforts regarding Ukrainian Children
Section 7019(e) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and
Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2024 (Div. F, P.L. 118-47) and House
Report 118-146**

The Department understands many U.S. citizens, including members of Congress, care deeply about the welfare of Ukrainian children and that many families are eager to open their homes to children affected by Russia's illegal, full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The Ukrainian government has repeatedly confirmed that intercountry adoptions are not possible under the current martial law or the three months following its cancellation. This position is consistent with global consensus on the importance of deferring adoption during times of war and crisis. During these times, it is difficult or impossible for adoption authorities to provide critical documentation to verify that children are actually orphans, eligible for adoption. To protect against child trafficking, it is paramount that the identities of prospective adoptive children be clearly established, and their social, legal, and familial status be fully verified by governmental authorities. The Government of Ukraine has decided not to rush cases or divert from these important safeguards. UNICEF, International Social Services (ISS), and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees all support the assessment that intercountry adoption should not occur during or immediately after crises to minimize illicit practices and reunite children with relatives when it is in their best interest.

The Department's 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report on Ukraine noted that human rights groups and media reported unsafe conditions in institutions,

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and there had been allegations that officials of several state-run institutions and orphanages had been complicit or willfully negligent in the sex and labor trafficking of children under their care. Recognizing these concerns and the risks they pose to institutionalized children, the Government of Ukraine, in partnership with the EU and UNICEF, launched the Better Care Initiative in June 2023. The Department continues to regularly engage with the Ukrainian government regarding the welfare of Ukrainian children. For more information regarding the current living conditions of displaced Ukrainian orphans, please contact the U.S. Agency for International Development, which is generally the lead on domestic social protection systems, including children deprived of parental care in Ukraine.

At this time, the Department is aware of 74 U.S. families who have started the immigration process to adopt from Ukraine; none have been matched with a specific child, and all are in the early stages of the adoption process. Many more families previously hosted Ukrainian children through hosting programs run by the Ukrainian government but have not begun the intercountry adoption process. As soon as Ukrainian authorities determine that they are able to resume intercountry adoptions, we will work closely with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and adoption service providers to provide updates to these families on the status of their cases.

Below is a list of some of the engagements between the Department and the Government of Ukraine related specifically to Ukraine's ability to conduct intercountry adoptions:

FY2022

- Prior to the invasion, the Department prepared for the impending crisis. The Ukrainian government agreed to waive wait times for final adoption orders, conduct virtual court hearings, and expedite passport issuance.

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- In March 2022, the Ukrainian government publicly stated that intercountry adoptions were not possible under current conditions.
- In May 2022, the Ministry of Social Policy amended their laws to allow custody transfer documents without requiring adoptive parents to travel to Ukraine.
- In July 2022, the Office of Children's Issues met with the Ministry of Social Policy. During this meeting, the Ukrainian government expressed its intent to focus on refining the procedures for domestic adoptions during martial law. They also discussed expanding those policies to allow foreign citizen relatives to adopt their minor Ukrainian relatives.
- In FY2022, there were 82 adoptions from Ukraine to the United States.

FY2023

- In June 2023, the Government of Ukraine issued a new decree, confirming that Ukraine will process intercountry adoptions in extremely limited circumstances. The Ukrainian government will process intercountry adoptions for foreign nationals who are adopting the biological sibling of an already adopted child and for individuals adopting a relative or stepchild.
- In September 2023, the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv met with the National Social Services of Ukraine to discuss current capacities for adoption processing. The Ukrainian government confirmed their stance on suspension and highlighted their inability to operate key adoption functions, particularly in occupied regions of Ukraine. The U.S. Embassy in Kyiv assured the Ukrainian government that the United States is ready to assist the Government of Ukraine when they are ready to resume adoptions.
- In FY2023, there were 10 adoptions from Ukraine to the United States. Since the beginning of the war, the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw and U.S.

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Consulate in Frankfurt have continued to process cases that had an official referral issued before to the invasion.

FY2024

- In January 2024, the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine met with the majority leader of the Verkhovna Rada to confirm the United States is ready to assist the government of Ukraine when they are ready to resume adoptions.
- In November 2023 and April 2024, the Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration met with Polish and Ukrainian officials to discuss long-term care solutions that prioritize the best interest and protection of children.

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