October 26, 2020

Open Letter Calling for U.S. Presidential Leadership to “End Sexual Violence Against Children”

Dear 2020 Candidates for the Offices of President and Vice-President:

Sexual violence against children and adolescents living in the United States is rampant, constitutes a public health pandemic, and causes grave physical and psychological trauma and social havoc.\(^1\) To address this crisis, we call on you to launch a bold Presidential Initiative to “End Sexual Violence Against Children” during the first 100 days of your new Administration, inclusive of prevention, healing and justice. We recommend simultaneously launching the following actions:

- **Mobilize Congress to Approve Comprehensive National Legislation, the “End Sexual Violence Against Children Act,” Informed by a U.S. Presidential Commission:** As President, we call on you to effectively address the pandemic of sexual violence against children in the United States by mobilizing Congress to pass comprehensive national legislation, increase federal funding for programs and research, and expand federal incentives to improve state laws to launch large scale prevention, healing, and justice programs to prevent violence, protect survivors, and reduce the cost of sexual violence against children to society\(^2\).

  As President, we call on you to institute a Presidential Commission to End Sexual Violence Against Children (The Commission). The Commission would be comprised of experts including researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and, importantly, adult survivors and would act as a catalyst to collect and synthesize data and research so that policymakers and the public would garner a comprehensive understanding of the crisis,

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\(^1\) Sexual violence consists of a range of sexual acts against a child, including but not limited to child sexual abuse, incest, rape, sexual violence in the context of dating/intimate relationships, sexual exploitation, online sexual abuse and exploitation, and non-contact sexual abuse.

\(^2\) Children is defined as 0-18 years of age
the costs to society and the potential to scale-up available solutions to prevent, heal, and ensure justice.

● **Declare Sexual Violence Against Children a US Public Health Emergency:** As President, we call on you to use your executive authority to officially declare sexual violence against children under 18 years of age a public health emergency and mandate an annual U.S. Surgeon General’s report.

● **Expand US Support for Global Programs to End Sexual Violence Against Children:** As President, we call on you to expand US leadership to galvanize global action to end sexual violence against children by increasing international funding to go to scale with prevention-healing-justice programs.

Should questions arise, if you need additional information, or if you or your staff would like to meet with members of this movement to discuss these issues, please contact Denise Edwards at National Children’s Alliance: dedwards@nca-online.org, Jill Ruck at Child USA: jruck@childusa.org or Paul Zeitz at Together for Girls: drpaulzeitz@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

**Teresa Huizar**  
Executive Director  
National Children’s Alliance

**Marci Hamilton**  
CEO  
CHILD USA

**Katelyn Brewer**  
President and CEO  
Darkness to Light

**Dr. Daniela Ligiero**  
Survivor and CEO  
Together for Girls

**Grace French**  
Survivor, Founder and President  
The Army of Survivors

**Dr. Melissa Merrick**  
President and CEO  
Prevent Child Abuse America

**Zach Hiner**  
Executive Director  
SNAP Network
**Additional National Organizations**

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Survivor and Author, “Finding Courage to Speak”

**Gary Barker**  
President and CEO, Promundo-US

**Scott Berkowitz**  
President, RAINN

**Sarah Blakemore**  
Chief Executive, Keeping Children Safe

**Brisa De Angulo, Esq.**  
Survivor, Founder and CEO, A Breeze of Hope Foundation

**Dr. Mary Ellsberg**  
Survivor and Director, Global Women’s Institute, George Washington University

**Dr. Howard R. Fradkin**  
Independent Trauma Psychologist

**Dr. Jennifer J. Freyd**  
Founder and President, Center for Institutional Courage

**Dr. Lyndon Haviland**  
Chair, Foundation Board, CUNY School of Public Health

**Margaret Hoelzer**  
US Olympian, National Spokesperson, National Children’s Advocacy Center

**Dr. Elizabeth Latourneau**  
Director, Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Timothy Lennon**  
President, SNAP Network

**Gary Kosman**  
CEO, America Learns

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Director, Center on Gender Equity and Health, University of California San Diego School of Medicine

**Esta Soler**  
President and Founder, Futures Without Violence

**Karla Valentin**  
Executive Assistant, Vertex Pharmaceuticals

**Dr. Paul Zeitz**  
Survivor and Executive Director, Build A Movement 2020
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Prescott House Child Advocacy Center

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Indiana Center for Prevention of Youth Abuse and Suicide

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NCAC

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Executive Director, MassKids/Enough Abuse Campaign

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Executive Director, Beacon Hill

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District Attorney, Columbus County

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District Social Service Counselor, Mooresville Graded School District

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Memphis Child Advocacy Center

**Sarah Drake Gilmer**  
Forensic Interviewer, Children's Advocacy Center of Eastern Arkansas

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**Lindy Keefe**  
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