



## **Statement by Lauren Book, M.S.Ed, Founder/CEO, Lauren's Kids**

Child sexual abuse is a silent epidemic, affecting more children in the U.S. each year than Autism and cancer combined<sup>1</sup>. A staggering 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 5 boys will become a victim of child sexual abuse before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday<sup>2</sup>, but less than half of these children will ever disclose the abuse they are suffering<sup>3</sup>. These are not random acts of sexual violence, and the long-held concept of “stranger danger” does not apply: 90 percent of child victims will suffer sexual abuse at the hands of someone they, and their families, know and trust.

With education and awareness, we can prevent 95 percent of child sexual abuse<sup>4</sup>, and encourage disclosure when abuse does occur. Because we can turn the tides with public awareness campaigns, and school-based programming like Lauren's Kids *Safer, Smarter Kids* prevention education curriculum.

With early intervention and appropriate, trauma-focused therapy, we can help victims heal into survivors and thrivers, and avoid tragic long-range effects including substance abuse, eating disorders and mental health issues. Because we cannot let stigma trump hope and healing.

With stronger policy and oversight surrounding youth serving organizations, we can prevent predators from becoming entrenched in and protected by individuals and institutions. Because the average predator will offend against 117 children in his or her lifetime<sup>5</sup>, and we simply cannot be OK with this fact.

Sexual abuse happens to children in every race, religion and socioeconomic status in the U.S. I am one of **42 million** survivors of this preventable scourge, and I will not rest until we do more to protect childhood here in the United States of America.

Let's break the silence, and shine light in some very dark places.

### ***About Lauren Book***

*Lauren Book, M.S. Ed, is an internationally respected and renowned child advocate, former classroom teacher and best-selling author. She is also one of 42 million survivors of child sexual abuse living in the U.S. today. Armed with the knowledge that 95 percent of child sexual abuse is preventable through education and awareness, Ms. Book is using her personal experience as a vehicle to create change. She has worked alongside developmental psychologists and career educators to create the country's*

*first-ever Pre-K through grade 12 child sexual abuse prevention curriculum. Each year for the past six, Book has laced up her sneakers to walk 1,500 miles across Florida to raise awareness about child sexual abuse and empower survivors, as well as advocate for the passage of laws to protect children and serve survivors. Ms. Book has been named a PEOPLE All-Star Among Us, L'Oreal Woman of Worth and is the recipient of a Congressional Medal of Merit for her tireless work to protect childhood. She is an EMMY nominee and Gracie Award-winning television producer and has been featured by national media outlets including Newsweek, Cosmopolitan Magazine, the Huffington Post, USA Today and many more. Ms. Book lives in South Florida where she serves as founder and CEO of the Lauren's Kids foundation.*

<sup>1</sup>1 in 68 children will be diagnosed with Autism; 1 in 285 children will be diagnosed with cancer before the age of 15.

<sup>2</sup> According to the National Children's Advocacy Center;

[http://www.theadvocacycenter.org/adv\\_abuse.html](http://www.theadvocacycenter.org/adv_abuse.html)

<sup>3</sup>According to Darkness2Light;

[http://www.d2l.org/site/c.4dICIjOkGclSE/b.6143427/k.38C5/Child\\_Sexual\\_Abuse\\_Statistics.htm](http://www.d2l.org/site/c.4dICIjOkGclSE/b.6143427/k.38C5/Child_Sexual_Abuse_Statistics.htm)

<sup>4</sup>According to the Child Molestation Prevention Institute;

[http://www.childmolestationprevention.org/pages/prevention\\_plan.html](http://www.childmolestationprevention.org/pages/prevention_plan.html)

<sup>5</sup>According to the National Sex Offenders Registry; <http://www.registeredoffenderslist.org/default.htm>

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