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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB624
Juvenile Law - Child Interrogation Protection Act

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Lori Blau

My name is Lori Blau and I am a resident of Frederick County, commuting daily to downtown Baltimore. I am a wife, Navy mom, and lover of the great outdoors of Maryland. In my capacity as a long-time resident of our beautiful state and a mother to three incredible young adults, I submit this testimony in favor of HB624.

Until recently, I was not aware that law enforcement has the right to pull in minor children, read them their Miranda warning, and have them sign off that they've been read their rights, all without a parent or guardian present. In fact, when I was made aware of this, I didn't believe it, and spent the better part of a day researching the facts, only to learn that it's true. This must stop.

I completely understand what law enforcement is up against. I work in downtown Baltimore and I see first hand that there are young people who sometimes engage in illegal activities and are not always held properly accountable. I understand that there is pressure from businesses, the Governor, and the people to address this issue. I want to address this issue. But children are children, and they have the right to be protected by their family or legal guardian.

Can you imagine how you would feel if one of the children in your life were pulled in by the police, questioned without your knowledge, and then allowed to sign away their right to legal representation because they thought they understood their Miranda rights? You would be furious, I would be furious, and we would be taking names and holding people accountable. Many children and their families do not have that power. So, we must rely on our state, we must rely on our government, to do the right thing, and protect our children by passing HB624. That may mean we have to work harder to address issues around youthful offending. But we must do it the right way, ensuring that every young person has their family or guardian present before they give up their right to legal representation.

Please, I urge this committee to do the right thing and pass the Child Interrogation Protection Act (HB624) as soon as you can. Our children are counting on you.

Respectfully,

Lori Blau