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Advocacy and supportive  
services for domestic abuse

Prevention and healing  
services for childhood trauma  
and sexual abuse

Education and intervention  
services for older adults

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Robin Belsky. I am the Chair of the Advocacy Committee of the Board of CHANA, a Program of the Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore. I am testifying in favor of HB 296. CHANA is a domestic violence, sexual abuse, and elder abuse agency that serves the citizens of Baltimore County and City. CHANA provides safety planning, emotional counseling, sheltering and legal advocacy. We follow-up on all domestic calls from the Northwest Precinct of the Baltimore City Police Department. We receive referrals from hospitals and health care programs around the area, especially in the field of elder abuse.

CHANA regularly speaks to clients about the benefits of the protective order process. While many are interested, for some, the physical barriers of going to the court and testifying before a judge are medically insurmountable. CHANA served a client who was attacked by her boyfriend after he broke into her apartment. The only way she could escape him was by jumping out of her third-story apartment window. She sustained very serious injuries from him and the fall. She was in the hospital and rehab for weeks. While her abuser was thankfully arrested, he began writing to her from jail almost immediately. CHANA staff discussed a protective order with her on many occasions to stop her abuser from contacting her and to protect her in the event that he was released. Ultimately, she decided that she was physically unable to get to court to file. If this bill were in place, she could have gotten the protection she needed, the communication from her abuser could have stopped and she could have focused on her healing.

CHANA also served an older adult who was assaulted by her nephew, who she raised. While hospitalized from her injuries, CHANA advocates discussed the benefits of a Protective Order with her so that her nephew would have to vacate her apartment and she would have a safe home to return to once she was released. She agreed that she wanted the order but could not go to court physically.

We ask you to support this bill so that our clients can receive the full relief and protection that they truly need when they have been abused and are medically unable to attend court.