



OFFICE OF
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FOR DORCHESTER COUNTY

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HB223/553825/1- UNF

February 10, 2025

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HB223, Family Law- Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations (“Know Before They Knock” Family Right to Notice Act) is opposed by the Dorchester County State’s Attorney’s Office. This bill will pose serious risks to vulnerable children. There are no additions to this bill that actually benefit the class of people the law is designed to protect- children. In reality, the proposals of this bill have the propensity to delay investigations days or even weeks, which in matters of child abuse or neglect could mean the difference of life or death.

This bill, nor its proposed amendments establish a clear definition of “parent” nor “caretaker.” If there is ambiguity as to which parent is the maltreater, or which caretaker is responsible for the child victim at the time of the CPS investigation, is the burden upon CPS to resolve such ambiguity? With specific requirements for signatures, and serious consequences proscribed by the bill, one would think those definitions would not be left for interpretation.

In terms of the consequences proscribed, it seems incredibly dangerous to the child to threaten removal from the home as a penalty for failing to cooperate with the investigation. Certainly, Child Protective Services has, and will maintain measures for removing a child from a home if and when there is a provable safety risk. Removal not based on such safety assessment does nothing but cause unreasonable mental strife on the children that the State should be aiming to protect.

HB233, if passed, will cause harmful delays to investigations, is ambiguously written, creates a criminal-like standard to investigations that will undoubtedly result in a lack of cooperation, and simply cannot benefit the children in the State. Dorchester County State’s Attorney’s Office is **OPPOSED**.