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February 13, 2025

TO: The Honorable Delegate Luke Clippinger
Chair, Judiciary Committee

FROM: Adam Spangler
Legislative Aide, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: House Bill 223 - Family Law - Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations
("Know Before They Knock" Family Right to Notice Act) – **Letter of Information**

The Office of the Attorney General writes to provide the Judiciary Committee a letter of information on **House Bill 223** - Family Law - Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations ("Know Before They Knock" Family Right to Notice Act). While the intention behind **House Bill 223** is to safeguard the rights of parents and caretakers during investigations, it is crucial to consider how these provisions might inadvertently create impediments to the protection of vulnerable children. **House Bill 223** stipulates that parents or caretakers are not required to allow investigators into their homes without a court order and that they have the right to refuse cooperation without the prior consultation of an attorney.

These rights, while important for ensuring due process, could lead to situations where critical evidence regarding a child's safety is either delayed or inaccessible. For instance, if an investigator cannot conduct an on-site assessment or interview the child on the premises due to a lack of consent, urgent concerns may go unaddressed. This can hinder timely interventions that are often necessary to ensure a child's immediate safety from harm.

Furthermore, the requirement for children to be interviewed or examined only under specific conditions also raises a concern. In instances where a child's safety is at stake, the ability of authorities to act swiftly can be compromised, potentially leaving children at risk of continued harm.

In essence, while it is essential to protect the rights of parents and caretakers, it is equally important to ensure that the safety and well-being of children remain the utmost priority. We urge you to consider these potential consequences and strike a better balance between parental rights and child protection.

cc: Judiciary Committee Members