



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

The Maryland House of Delegates, 6 Bladen Street, Room 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for House Bill 223 (HB 223) – the “Know Before They Knock” Family Right to Notice Act. This bill requires local departments of social services and law enforcement agencies to provide oral and written notice of certain rights to a parent or caretaker at the time of initial contact during a child abuse or neglect investigation. Additionally, it ensures that any evidence obtained in violation of this Act is excluded from judicial or administrative proceedings, reinforcing due process and fairness for families involved in these investigations.

Black Marylanders are disproportionately impacted by child welfare investigations, with national data indicating that 53% of all Black children will be subject to such investigations by the time they turn 18. These investigations too often lead to unnecessary family separations, increased trauma, and further entrenchment in systemic injustice. HB 223 directly addresses these disparities by ensuring that Black families are fully informed of their rights and have the ability to make decisions with legal counsel before engaging in an investigation. By implementing clear, transparent, and standardized notice requirements, this bill helps prevent coercive practices, racial bias in child welfare cases, and unnecessary disruption to Black families. It is a necessary safeguard against a system that has historically over-surveilled and penalized communities of color.

By protecting Black parents and caretakers from being unknowingly pressured into compliance with intrusive investigations, HB 223 promotes transparency, accountability, and fairness in child welfare proceedings. Ensuring that families receive written notice of their rights will help level the playing field, empowering Black parents with the knowledge they need to navigate the system and protect their children. This legislation upholds the fundamental right of Black families to be treated with dignity and respect, reducing the likelihood of unwarranted state intervention and keeping families together.

For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports HB 223.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland