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2016-2018

February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Honorable Chair Barlett and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

CASA of Cecil County respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 0281.

HB 0281 advances a core principle that CASA sees every day in its work: child safety must always come first. Children who have experienced abuse or neglect are among the most vulnerable populations in our communities. Ensuring that individuals who care for, supervise, or have access to children undergo thorough and consistent criminal background investigations is a necessary safeguard to help prevent further harm.

CASA volunteers regularly encounter cases in which a child's trauma is compounded by instability, unsafe environments, or failures in screening and oversight. As the U.S. Department of Justice has noted, "children exposed to maltreatment are at increased risk for lifelong physical, emotional, and behavioral challenges." Preventing harm before it occurs is not only more humane—it is more effective.

By strengthening and clarifying background investigation requirements, HB 0281 reinforces public trust in child-serving systems and aligns Maryland's policies with best practices designed to protect children and promote stability. These protections directly support CASA's work by helping ensure that children are placed and served in environments that are as safe as possible while they work toward permanency.

Respectfully submitted,  
CASA Of Cecil County



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