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Honorable Chair Bartlett and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of CASA of Cecil County, we submit testimony in opposition to House Bill 890, the *Know Before They Knock Family Right to Notice Act*.

HB 890 alters Maryland's child abuse and neglect investigation process by requiring that on-site interviews be attempted with a child's parent or legal guardian and by mandating that investigators provide detailed notice of parental rights at the time of initial contact. The bill includes provisions stating that a parent or guardian is not required to allow entry into the home or permit an interview or examination of a child without a court order under certain circumstances.

From CASA's direct work in child welfare cases, we know that timely access to children is essential in situations involving suspected abuse or neglect. In many cases, the parent or guardian may be the alleged abuser or may be in a position to influence, intimidate, or prevent a child from speaking freely. Policies that allow a parent or guardian to deny access to investigators can unintentionally place control back into the hands of those who may be causing harm.

Child protective investigations must prioritize the safety of vulnerable children and ensure that trained professionals are able to see and speak with children promptly when concerns are raised. Any barriers that delay or restrict that access increase risk and undermine the ability of the system to respond effectively.

For these reasons, CASA of Cecil County strongly urges an unfavorable report on HB 890.

Respectfully submitted,
Grant Handley
CASA of Cecil County



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