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WOMEN LEGISLATORS OF MARYLAND
THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

02/18/2026

To: Delegate J. Sandy Barlett, Chair

Delegate Debra Davis, Vice Chair.

Judiciary Committee

The Maryland Women's Caucus is proud to express its support for **HB 890 – Family Law – Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations (“Know Before They Knock” Family Right to Notice Act)**.

HB 890 updates the procedures governing child abuse and neglect investigations to ensure that families are informed of their legal rights at the outset of an investigation. The bill requires authorities to promptly conduct an on-site interview with a parent or guardian upon receipt of a report of suspected abuse or neglect and to provide clear notice of key legal rights, including the right to refuse entry into a residence and the right to consult with an attorney. These safeguards promote transparency and ensure that families understand the legal implications of their interactions with investigators.

The legislation also clarifies the use of an **alternative response** for low-risk reports of abuse or neglect. This approach focuses on assessing the risk of harm or future maltreatment while addressing the needs of the family, without making a formal determination that abuse or neglect occurred. Importantly, alternative response is limited to appropriate cases and expressly excludes allegations involving sexual abuse, serious physical injury, or death, which remain subject to full investigative procedures designed to protect child safety and welfare.

HB 890 provides critical protections for parents and guardians who may be unfamiliar with their legal rights or who are falsely accused of abuse or neglect. These protections are particularly important in high-conflict family situations, including contentious divorces, where allegations may be misused as a tool for control. Investigations and recorded allegations in such cases can have lasting and harmful consequences for parents who have not engaged in abusive conduct.

Additionally, the bill recognizes that some reports arise from circumstances unrelated to abuse or neglect, such as rare medical conditions that cause easy bruising or fractures, routine childhood injuries, or reasonable parental discipline. By allowing for an alternative response in these cases, HB 890 ensures that families receive appropriate support without unnecessary escalation.

For these reasons, the Maryland Women's Caucus respectfully urges a **favorable report** on HB 890.