

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5873

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 24, 2005

Title: An act relating to duties of the family and children's ombudsman.

Brief Description: Revising the duties of the family and children's ombudsman.

Sponsors: Senators Stevens, Hargrove, Regala, Carrell, Mulliken, Schmidt, Zarelli, Deccio, Benson, McCaslin, Delvin, Brandland, Johnson, Hewitt, Kohl-Welles and Pflug.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/17/05, 2/24/05 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5873 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Brandland, Carrell and McAuliffe.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: The Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman (OFCO) was created in 1996 within the office of the Governor. The office was created to promote public awareness of family and children's services as they pertain to the placement, supervision, and treatment of children in the state's care, or in facilities licensed by the state. OFCO is to identify systemic issues for the Governor and the legislature to act upon, and to ensure agency compliance with its own policies, regulations, and statutes.

OFCO duties include providing information to those receiving services from family and children's services, investigate complaints, monitor the delivery of services, periodically review facilities, recommend changes in procedures, and submit an annual report with recommendations.

Summary of Substitute Bill: In addition to the duties it currently performs, OFCO is to investigate individual casework of Child Protective Services (CPS) and Child Welfare Services (CWS) caseload carrying employees and their supervisors, chosen at random. OFCO will investigate compliance with the following elements: training; agency policies; laws; safety; and case investigations. OFCO will also assess caseload levels and access to clerical support.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: OFCO will investigate casework of CPS caseload carrying employees and supervisors, instead of assessing casework.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 14, 2005.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Although we don't support or oppose legislation we support the intent of this bill. We already perform some of these functions, especially where child fatalities are involved. Our agency tends to be reactive, this bill will allow us to become more proactive.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Mary Meinig, Ombudsman, Office of Family and Children's Ombudsman.