

Passed HHS
7-0!

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SB-201 - Child Protection Ombudsman Advisory Work Group

Senator Newell / Representative Singer

**Co-Sponsors: Aguilar, Carroll, Guzman, Kefalas, Lambert, Lundberg,
Nicholson, Steadman, Todd, May, Melton**

Background:

- In 2010, the Legislature unanimously voted to create the Child Protection Ombudsman to provide an "...independent resource to help protect children at risk and have impartial oversight, accountability, and recommendations for the child welfare system." Due to many external pressures at the time, the Office was set up as a contract under the CDHS Executive Director. **Over time, this has created an inherent conflict for both parties—the Ombudsman is essentially reporting to the department it oversees, and CDHS is monitoring a contract of an alleged independent office.**
- While the Ombudsman has started to assist in strengthening child protection services in Colorado, and it has attempted to establish a new, safe and secure way for mandatory reporters and concerned citizens to:
 - Report concerns about the child welfare system
 - Seek resolution of challenges or obstacles within the system
 - Eliminate fear of retribution of complaints
 - Contribute input toward improving and strengthening the child protection system.
- CDHS has attempted to do their job of monitoring the contract of the Ombudsman, as required in statute.

SB-201 will:

- Reform and repurpose the Advisory Work Group to create a detailed plan to create **accountable autonomy for the Child Protection Ombudsman.**
- The Work Group will meet over the interim and make recommendations to the General Assembly for statutory changes for next session.
- The group may consult with the State Auditor and the findings on the Ombudsman and CDHS audits being conducted right now.
- Members will serve without compensation or reimbursement.

We need to rectify this conflict in statute so all parties can effectively function in their respective roles protecting children.

Supporters on Back!

Supporters

Colorado Department of Human Services
Rocky Mountain Children's Law Center
Tennyson Center for Children Every Child Matters
CAFCA: Colorado Association of Family and Children Agencies
Kempe Foundation for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse
Mount Saint Vincent Home
Colorado Children's Campaign
Foster Care and Adoption Agencies of Colorado
Colorado Council of Churches
National Association of Social Workers Colorado Chapter