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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS OF HOUSE BILL 1292

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The Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP) advises the Governor on criminal justice strategies, coordinates across public safety agencies, and allocates resources statewide to support public safety. GOCPP is responsible for the administration of the State Child Advocacy Centers grant program.

HB 1292 requires the formation of statewide standards for Child Advocacy Centers (CACs), sets up a complaint process for violations of those standards, and adds an annual reporting requirement for GOCPP. While GOCPP supports these goals, the bill assigns responsibilities that exceed the agency's expertise and capacity.

As written, HB 1292 requires GOCPP to receive and evaluate complaints before referring them to the Office of the Attorney General. GOCPP does not possess the clinical or programmatic expertise necessary to evaluate these complex, specialized complaints. GOCPP would require additional PINs for staff with specialized knowledge to do this work. Additionally, the bill does not define the standard or criteria that requires a complaint be forwarded to the Attorney General's Office. Finally, routing complaints through an intermediary agency creates unnecessary delays.

HB 1292 also adds an annual reporting requirement for GOCPP to provide information on the compliance of each CAC with the statewide standards. GOCPP does not currently have the expertise to make substantive compliance determinations, nor does a framework exist for conducting such evaluations.

If the committee moves forward with this bill, GOCPP suggests that the due date requiring GOCPP to report on each CAC's compliance with the statewide standards and the required annual report be the same date. This will synchronize the website reporting and more efficiently enable GOCPP to provide a full fiscal year of information.

The Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy urges the House Appropriations Committee to amend HB 1292 and report favorably.