

## THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

*Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and wellbeing.*



**HB0980 - Family Law and State Government - Child Protection and the  
Office of the Child Welfare Ombudsman (Kanaiyah's Law)  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
April 2, 2026**

### **Position: INFORMATION ONLY**

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children is a consortium of organizations and individuals formed in 1992 who are concerned about the care of Maryland's most vulnerable children and work together to educate and promote meaningful child welfare reform. Our members bring decades of experience providing direct services, representing children in state custody, and caring for children with complex needs.

For several years, we have followed Maryland's placement crisis with growing alarm. Children with high-intensity behavioral health needs, like Kanaiyah Ward, have had literally nowhere to go but hotels with purchased supervision. We appreciate the legislature's attention to strengthening care for these children and share the goal of improving safety and stability. We wholeheartedly agree with the intent of this legislation that no child should ever experience what Kanaiyah Ward did in her short life.

While we support efforts to end inappropriate placements, prohibiting unlicensed settings alone does not create the therapeutic placements children with complex needs require. These youth have a myriad of challenges, including suicidal and homicidal thoughts and attempts, impulsive and dysregulated behaviors, and oftentimes, developmental challenges. They have suffered significant trauma in their lives that have often led to self-harming behaviors. These children desperately need therapeutic placement options that keep them safe and provide the needed treatment resources for them to heal.

In a resource-rich state like ours, no child should have "**nowhere to go.**" The real solution is sustained investment in specialized, high-quality placements that can meet these children's needs.

With respect to safety of children following termination of their services case with the Department of Social Services, we understand that recent audits identified approximately seven households out of roughly 3,000 guardianship subsidy recipients that shared an address with someone on the sex offender registry. But we also note that none of the children were ultimately deemed to be at risk. It is important to understand that guardianship is only recommended after a home study that includes criminal background checks, and once custody is awarded, these families should have the same protections from unnecessary government intrusion as any other family.

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Expanding ongoing re-checks and home visits based solely on criminal background matches - absent any indicators of maltreatment - risks widening state surveillance into family life without clear evidence of improved safety. It would also impose significant new burdens on an already strained workforce. These consequences deserve careful consideration, including whether similar monitoring would be applied to adoptive families.

The Ombudsman office is promising but as a reminder, there has been a foster youth ombudsman at the Department of Human Services (although currently that position is unfilled). Our coalition is interested in having this position at the Governor's Office for Children, and included with this testimony is state-by-state research we conducted tracking the scope, required backgrounds, and locations of such positions across the country.

Finally, in terms of priorities for child welfare expenditures, we recently helped administer a survey of local department of social services caseworkers assigned to child welfare identified needs for placement resources as one of their highest priorities. The survey showed that "limited availability of foster homes, residential, treatment centers, and appropriate placements for high-need youth, have led to prolonged hospital stays, hotel use, and unsafe interim solutions". Staff also reported the need for:

- practical tools to adequately address these challenging placement situations,
- use of agency vehicles to safely transport clients,
- functioning cell phones; and
- access to paraprofessional assistance to support health care and family visits.

We respectfully urge thoughtful refinement of this bill to protect children while also safeguarding families' rights. We strongly believe in the importance of ensuring that the system has the capacity and resources to meet the needs of youth like Kanaiyah, and to deliver on its promises to our most vulnerable youth.

# HB0980 Ombudsman Placement Models (Child Welfare)

## Synopsis

### Thorough Model:

Model Type	Description	States
<b>Independent &amp; Autonomous (Child Welfare-Specific)</b>	Separate from child welfare agency, independent oversight, subpoena power, confidentiality, public reporting	Arkansas, Colorado, <b>Connecticut</b> , Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, <b>Massachusetts</b> , Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, <b>Rhode Island</b> , South Carolina, Tennessee, <b>Virginia</b> , Washington, <b>West Virginia</b>
Within Agency but Statutorily Autonomous	Located within agency but designed to operate independently	California, Illinois, New Jersey, Texas
General Jurisdiction Ombudsman	Oversees all agencies, usually legislative branch	Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, Iowa, Montana, Nebraska
Non-Independent (Within Agency)	Fully inside DHS/child welfare agency	Florida, Illinois, Ohio, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Texas
Other Ombudsman-Like Programs	Limited or specialized programs	Arkansas, California, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, Texas

State	Office	Jurisdiction & location within the government	Appointment & qualification	Duties & powers of the ombudsman/child advocate
Alaska  Alaska Stat. 24.55.010-340	<a href="#">Ombudsman</a>	The ombudsman has jurisdiction to investigate the administrative acts of all Alaska agencies and is independent and autonomous of those agencies. As part of the legislative branch, the administrative facilities and services of the legislative affairs agency may be used for the management of the office of the ombudsman.	The ombudsman is selected by the Alaska legislature's ombudsman selection committee, subject to approval by the legislature and governor. The ombudsman serves for a term of five years and may be reappointed.  The ombudsman must be at least 21 years old, a qualified voter, resident in the state for three years, and cannot be a candidate for, or hold, public office.	The ombudsman may investigate complaints; has access to confidential records; issues subpoenas; and must maintain confidentiality. The ombudsman may issue investigative reports and may submit recommendations to the legislature.
Arizona	<a href="#">Ombudsman</a> <a href="#">Citizens Aide</a>	The ombudsman oversees all Arizona agencies and is independent and autonomous of those agencies. The office of the	The ombudsman is appointed by a legislative committee. The ombudsman serves five-year terms and	The ombudsman may investigate the administrative acts of agencies; prepare

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Ariz. Rev. Stat. 41-1371 through 41-1383		ombudsman is an independent agency of the Arizona Legislature and may not be physically located in the state office or any agency office.	cannot serve more than three full terms.  The ombudsman must be at least 25 years old, have been a state resident for at least six months, and possess investigatory experience. Additionally, the ombudsman must not have served in state office within one year of their first day as ombudsman.	an annual and public report; access confidential information; issue subpoenas; maintain confidentiality; make recommendations; and appoint an ombudsman's assistant to aid their work.
Arkansas  Ark. Code Ann. § 16-87-216	<a href="#">Public Defender's Commission's Juvenile Ombudsman</a>	The ombudsman is part of the public defender's commission, the juvenile ombudsman provides for independent oversight of the division of youth service's facilities and programs that are unlicensed or unaccredited.	The ombudsman is appointed by the executive director of the public defender's commission. The ombudsman should have an advanced degree in a related field and four years of related experience.	The ombudsman has access to confidential information and juveniles in the state's custody; receives and investigates complaints; prepares annual reports; identifies instances where necessary services are not being provided to juveniles; and visits division of youth services facilities to ensure they are running properly and safely.
Arkansas  A.C.A. § 20-82-211; Act 945	<a href="#">Child Welfare Ombudsman</a>	The child welfare ombudsman is located within the Arkansas child abuse/rape/domestic violence commission and is supervised by the executive director.	The minimum qualifications include a master's degree in social work or psychology, or comparable experience in one or more programs that serve juveniles or families.	The ombudsman's duties include investigating complaints, answering questions and making referrals, providing information on department procedures, resolving complaints and advocating for improvements to the child welfare system.
California  Cal. Welfare And Institutions Code § 16160-16167	<a href="#">Ombudsman for Foster Care</a>	The ombudsman is established as an autonomous entity within the state department of social services with the oversight of children in foster care and relating to their care, placement or services.	The department director and an interest committee (whose members are appointed by the director) shall appoint the ombudsman for a term of four years. The ombudsman may be appointed for consecutive terms.	The California ombudsman for foster care provides training and technical assistance; investigates complaints; has access to confidential information; must maintain confidentiality; and prepares an annual report for the legislature that is available to the public.
California  West's Ann.Cal.Welf. & Inst.Code § 2200-2200.7	<a href="#">Ombudsperson of the Office of Youth and Community Restoration</a>	The ombudsman is established within the office of youth and community restoration.	There is no statutory procedure for appointing the ombudsman.	The ombudsman's duties include investigating complaints from youth; providing regular reports on complaints; providing training and technical assistance to youths in the juvenile systems and other relevant actors; visiting juvenile facilities; and approves juvenile grants.
Colorado	<a href="#">Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman</a>	The child protection ombudsman and the related child protection ombudsman board are established in the judicial	The child protection ombudsman is selected by a 2/3 majority vote of the child protection	The child protection ombudsman receives and investigates complaints; maintains confidentiality;

Colo. Rev. Stat. § 19-3.3-101 to - 109		department as independent and autonomous agencies.	ombudsman board. This board is comprised of up to 12 individuals. These individuals are appointed by chief justice of the Colorado Supreme Court, the governor, the president and minority leader of the Senate and the speaker and minority leader of the House of Representatives.	has access to confidential information; cannot subpoena; makes recommendations; reports annually; and educates the public.
Connecticut  Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46a-13k	<a href="#">Office of the Child Advocate</a>	The child advocate shall act independently of any state department. The office of the child advocate is located within the office of governmental accountability.	The child advocate is appointed by the governor with approval by the General Assembly to serve a four-year term and may be reappointed.	The child advocate receives and investigates complaints; periodically reviews institutions; recommends policy changes; provides training to attorneys and guardians ad litem; has access to confidential information; issues subpoenas; maintains confidentiality; maintains a child fatality review panel; represents a child in court; and produces annual and public reports.
Delaware  Del. Code Ann. tit. 29 § 9001A – 9009A	<a href="#">Office of the Child Advocate</a>	The office of the child advocate is a non-judicial agency of the court. The child advocate serves as executive director to the committee of the child protection accountability commission (CPAC).	The child advocate is appointed by the executive committee of the child protection accountability commission.  The child advocate shall be an attorney duly licensed to practice law in Delaware.	The child advocate provides legal representation of children; provides public education and legislative advocacy; reviews child policy; recommends changes, submits an annual report; maintains confidentiality; effectuates the purposes of the CPAC.
Florida	<a href="#">Children’s Ombudsman</a>	The office of the children’s ombudsman exists within the Florida department of children and families.	There is no statutory procedure for appointing the ombudsman.	The office will receive complaints; identify and explain relevant policies to children and young adults; provide recommendations to address systemic problems; and consult with children and young adults when creating or revising any digital or print material
Georgia  Ga. Code Ann, § 15-11-740 et. Seq.	<a href="#">Office of the Child Advocate</a>	The child advocate provides independent oversight of persons, organizations and agencies responsible for providing services to or caring for children who are victims of child abuse and neglect, or whose domestic situation requires intervention by the state. The child advocate is located within the governor’s office of planning and budget for administrative purposes only.	The governor shall create a nominating committee, which will submit a list of three names to the governor for consideration. The advocate will be qualified by training and experience and will have knowledge of the child welfare system, the juvenile justice system, and the legal system.	The child advocate coordinates the child fatality review panel; investigates complaints; has access to confidential records; subpoenas records; reviews the facilities and procedures of any institution or residence; provides public education and legislative advocacy; and provides annual and

				public reports.
Hawaii  Hawaii Rev. Stat. § 96-1 to 96-19	<a href="#">Office of the Ombudsman</a>	The ombudsman is an officer of the Legislature and has jurisdiction to investigate the administrative acts of all agencies. The ombudsman operates independently and autonomously of state and county agencies.	The ombudsman is appointed by a majority vote in each house of the Legislature for a six-year term, with a three-term limit.  The ombudsman may not be a candidate for or hold any other state office. No person may serve as ombudsman within two years of serving in the legislature.	The ombudsman receives and investigates complaints; has access to confidential information; issues subpoenas; makes recommendations to state agencies; publishes recommendations; maintains confidentiality; and publishes an annual and public report.
Idaho  Idaho Rev. Stat. § 56-1901 to 56-1908	<a href="#">The Office of the Health and Social Services Ombudsman</a>	The office of the health and social services ombudsman operates independently and is housed in the department of self-governing agencies.	The health and social services ombudsman shall be appointed by the governor and subject to confirmation by the senate. Such individual shall be qualified by training and experience to perform the duties and exercise the powers of the health and social services ombudsman as provided in statute.	The health and social services ombudsman monitors and evaluates the compliance of public agencies and private entities with relevant statutes, rules, and policies pertaining to the provision of health and social services to service recipients.
Illinois  Ch. 20 Ill. Comp. Stat. § 505/35.5	<a href="#">DCFS Office of the Inspector General</a>	The inspector general shall function independently, within the department of children and family services, to conduct investigations into any employee, foster parent, service provider, or contractor of the department of children and family services.	The inspector general is appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate for a four-year term.	The inspector general makes recommendations to the director of the department of children and family services; has access to confidential information; acts as a liaison between the department and the police; has the power to subpoena; and publishes an annual and public report.
Indiana  Ind. Code § 4-13-19	<a href="#">Department of Child Services Ombudsman</a>	The ombudsman is housed in the department of administration and has the authority to investigate and resolve complaints concerning the department of child services. The ombudsman is independent of DCS.	The ombudsman is appointed by the governor.  The ombudsman must be an attorney licensed to practice law in Indiana or a social worker with a master's degree. They must have significant experience or education in child development and child advocacy, including at least two (2) years' experience working with child abuse and neglect. The ombudsman cannot have worked for DCS within the preceding 12 months.	The ombudsman receives and investigates complaints; provides public education; recommends changes; has access to confidential information; maintains confidentiality; makes reports.
Iowa  Iowa Code § 2C-1 et.seq.	<a href="#">Office of Ombudsman</a>	The ombudsman is part of the legislative branch. It acts independently and has the jurisdiction to investigate complaints about all state and local government agencies.	The ombudsman is appointed by the legislative council, with the approval of the Senate and House of representatives, for a term of four years and may be reappointed.	The ombudsman investigates administrative agencies; has access to confidential information; maintains confidentiality; investigates complaints concerning child welfare

			The ombudsman must be a U.S. citizen, an Iowa resident, and qualified to analyze problems of law, administration and public policy.	services, juvenile justice, and violence on school properties; issues subpoenas; makes recommendations; publishes conclusions; and provides annual and public reports.
Kansas  <a href="#">Executive Order 21-28</a>	<a href="#">Division of the Child Advocate</a>	The division of the child advocate is in the department of administration and functions as an independent agency.	There is no statutory procedure for staffing the division of the child advocate.	The division of the child advocate provides oversight of state child welfare services; improves delivery of child welfare services; completes a review of Kansas child welfare policies, procedures, and practices; investigates complaints; maintains confidentiality; advocates for policies; and informs citizens.
Kentucky  KY ST § 43.035	<a href="#">The Commonwealth Office of the Ombudsman</a>	The ombudsman is an independent office administratively attached to the auditor of public accounts.	The auditor of public accounts appoints the executive director of the office of the ombudsman.	The ombudsman investigates administrative acts undertaken by the cabinet for health and family services; makes recommendations to improve CHFS's performance; reports cases of employee misconduct; compiles citizen complaints; and provides information to the attorney general.
Louisiana  LSA-R.S. 24:525	<a href="#">Child Ombudsman</a>	The ombudsman is an independent position housed in the legislative auditor's office. The ombudsman monitors agencies involved in the protection of children and delivery of services to children; reviews state policies and procedures to ensure they protect children's rights; and safeguards the welfare of children through educational advocacy, system reform, public awareness, and training.	The child ombudsman is appointed by the legislative auditor. They shall have knowledge of the child welfare system and the legal system and be qualified by training and experience.	The ombudsman evaluates the state's delivery of services to children; reviews state procedures related to children's services; reviews complaints concerning state agencies; acts as a liaison for families; reviews facilities and procedures; conducts education and advocacy programs; and prepares biennial reports.
Maine  Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 22 § 4087-A	<a href="#">Child Welfare Services Ombudsman</a>	The ombudsman is an independent program within the executive department that oversees child welfare services provided by the department of health and human services. The office operates by contract with a nonprofit organization.	The ombudsman office operates by contract with a nonprofit organization chosen by the executive department. The ombudsman shall be an attorney or master's level social worker with experience in child welfare, development, and advocacy. The ombudsman may not be actively involved in state politics.	The ombudsman receives and investigates complaints; provides public outreach; has access to persons, files, and records; does not have the power to subpoena; maintains confidentiality; and provides annual and public reports.
Maryland	<a href="#">Foster Youth Ombuds</a>	The foster youth ombudsman is an autonomous position within the department of human resources	The foster youth ombudsman is hired by the secretary of the department	The foster parent ombudsman ensures accountability in foster

		that reports directly to the Secretary.	of human resources.	care services; investigates complaints about state and local agencies; serves as an intermediary for foster children; makes policy recommendations; and identifies best practices.
Massachusetts  Mass Gen. Laws ch. 18 § 1-13	<a href="#">Office of the Child Advocate</a>	The child advocate is an independent and autonomous executive branch office with the jurisdiction to oversee children served by the child welfare or juvenile justice systems.	The child advocate is appointed by a majority vote of the attorney general, the state auditor, and the governor from a list of three nominees submitted by a nominating committee. The child advocate serves a five year term and may not serve for more than two terms.	The child advocate investigates critical incidents; receives and investigates complaints; reviews and makes recommendations for system-wide changes; educates the public; has access to facilities and records; has the power to subpoena; and provides annual and public reports.
Michigan  Mich. Comp. Laws § 722.921 et.seq.	<a href="#">Office of the Child Advocate</a>	The ombudsman is independent and autonomous within the Executive Branch department of Technology, Management and Budget, and has the jurisdiction to oversee child welfare functions.	The ombudsman is appointed by the Governor with the consent of the Senate and serves at the pleasure of the Governor.  The ombudsman must be qualified by training and experience.	The ombudsman receives and investigates complaints; advocates to the legislature; makes recommendations; has access to confidential records; issues subpoenas; holds informal hearings; maintains confidentiality; provides annual and public reports.
Minnesota  Minn. Stat. § 257.0755 et.seq.	<a href="#">Office of Ombudsperson for Families</a>	The Office of Ombudsperson for Families is an independent state agency. There are three ombudspersons working with three different communities of color. Each Ombudsperson works independently from, but in collaboration with, each of the following groups: the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs; the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage; and the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans	The Ombudsperson for each community shall be selected by the applicable community-specific board and serve at the pleasure of the respective communities.  Each Ombudsperson shall be highly competent and qualified to analyze questions of law, administration, and public policy regarding the protection and placement of children from families of color; must be experienced in dealing with communities of color and knowledgeable about the needs of those communities; and must not hold any other public office.	The Ombudsperson monitors agency compliance with all laws regarding child protection and placement as to the impact on children of color; provides cultural diversity training to state and local courts; receives and investigates complaints; has access to confidential information; has subpoena power; makes recommendations; and provides annual and public reports.
Minnesota  MN ST § 3.9215	<a href="#">Ombudsperson for American Indian Families</a>	The ombudsperson shall operate independently from and in collaboration with the Indian Affairs Council and the American Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council.	The ombudsperson shall be selected by the American Indian community-specific board. Each ombudsperson must be selected without regard to political affiliation and shall be a person highly competent and qualified to analyze questions of law, administration, and public policy regarding the protection and placement of	The ombudsman will monitor agencies' compliance with child protection laws; investigate state programs that serve American Indian communities; receive and investigate complaints; examine records; issue subpoenas; make recommendations; and issue public reports.

			children. In addition, the ombudsperson must be experienced in working collaboratively with the American Indian and Alaska Native communities or nations and knowledgeable about the needs of those communities, the Indian Child Welfare Act and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act, and best practices regarding prevention, cultural resources, and historical trauma. No individual may serve as the ombudsperson for American Indian families while holding any other public office.	
Missouri  Mo. Rev. Stat. § 37.705	<a href="#">Office of Child Advocate</a>	The Office of Child Advocate is part of the Executive Branch Office of Administration and independently monitors the services and programs offered by the department of social services, the department of mental health, and the juvenile court. The Child Advocate reports directly to the Commissioner of the Office of Administration.	The Child Advocate is appointed jointly by the Governor and the Chief Justice of the Missouri Supreme Court with the Senate's advice and consent. The Child Advocate shall hold office for a term of six years.	The Child Advocate receives and investigates complaints; communicates with children under protective services; has access to confidential information; has the power to subpoena; makes recommendations; educates the public; maintains confidentiality; coordinates mediation efforts between school districts and students when allegations of child abuse arise in a school setting; and provides annual and public reports.
Montana  MCA 41-3-1208 et seq.	<a href="#">Office of Child and Family Ombudsman</a>	The ombudsman is part of the department of Justice and works in consultation with the department and appropriate county attorneys to strengthen children and family services.	The ombudsman is appointed by the attorney general. They shall be a resident of Montana and qualified by training and experience.	The ombudsman investigates reports; inspects and subpoenas records; investigates reports of child abuse or neglect; reviews department procedures and promotes best practices; prepares educational materials; and provides annual and public reports.
Nebraska  Neb. Rev. Stat. § 81-8,240 to 8-8,254	<a href="#">Public Counsel</a>	The public counsel is part of the legislative branch and independently oversees all state agencies.	The ombudsman is appointed by a two-thirds vote of the Legislature for a term of six years.  The ombudsman shall be a person well equipped to analyze problems of law, administration, and public policy and shall not be actively involved in partisan affairs. No person may serve as Public Counsel within two years of serving in the	The ombudsman receives and investigates complaints; conducts investigations into administrative agencies; has access to information; issues subpoenas; makes recommendations; and publishes annual reports.

			Legislature, or while such person is a candidate for or holds any other state office, or while engaged in any other occupation for reward or profit.	
Nebraska  Neb.Rev.St. § 43-4317 et. Seq.	<a href="#">Office of Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare</a>	The inspector general exists within the office of public counsel to conduct audits, investigations, inspections, and other reviews of Nebraska's child welfare system.	The inspector general is appointed by the public counsel with approval from the chairperson of the executive board of the legislative council and the chairperson of the Health and Human Services Committee. The inspector general shall be appointed for a five-year term and should have demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, investigation, or criminal justice administration. The inspector general must not be involved in partisan affairs.	The inspector general investigates instances of misconduct in the department of Health and Human Services, foster homes, and juvenile care centers, and receives reports from the Office of Juvenile Services and juvenile care centers on child welfare.
Nevada  N.R.S. 432.157	<a href="#">Advocate for Missing and Exploited Children</a>	The advocate operates within the office of the attorney general. It is directed to advocate for missing and exploited children before any public or private body.	The advocate is appointed by the attorney general and must be an attorney licensed in Nevada.	The advocate investigates crimes concerning missing and exploited children; educates the public; provides educational materials to schools; appears as an amicus curia on behalf of missing and exploited children; recommends legislation; and has access to information.
New Hampshire  N.H. Rev. Stat. § 21-V:2	<a href="#">Office of the Child Advocate</a>	The Office of the Child Advocate shall be an independent agency, administratively attached to the department of administrative services pursuant to RSA 21-G:10	The director of the Office of the Child Advocate will be appointed by the governor and executive council upon the oversight commission's recommendation. The director shall serve a term of four years and should possess a professional graduate degree in law, social work, public health, or a related field and be qualified by education, experience, and expertise.	The Office of the Child Advocate provides independent oversight of government agencies that serve children; review and investigate complaints; provide assistance to children and families; provide information to the public; review procedures; access information; issue subpoenas; and report annually.
New Jersey	<a href="#">Office of Advocacy</a>	The Office of Advocacy is a non-statutory office within the department of Children and Families that serves as an independent advocate for children and families.		The Office of Advocacy provides education; receives and reviews complaints.
New Mexico	<a href="#">Office of Children's Rights</a>	The Office of Children's Rights is located within the Children, Youth & Families department.	There is no statutory process for staffing the Office of Children's Rights.	The Office of Children's Rights provides consultation on foster care and immigrants' rights

				cases; helps educate the public; advocates for public benefits and social justice; and receives and investigates complaints.
New York N.Y. Exec. Law § 523	<a href="#">Office of the Ombudsman</a>	The ombudsman operates within the Office of Children and Family Services.	The ombudsman is appointed by the Commissioner of the Office of Children and Family Services.  The director of the Office of the Ombudsman must be an attorney licensed to practice law. The ombudsmen staff must be licensed attorneys or persons with expertise in juvenile justice or youth rights.	The ombudsman receives and investigates complaints; monitors child welfare policy; advises residential youth; helps youth access legal support; makes recommendations; has access to confidential information; receives critical incident reports; maintains confidentiality; and provides monthly reports.
Ohio Ohio Rev. Code § 5101.891-899	<a href="#">Youth and Family Ombudsman Office</a>	The youth and family ombudsman office is under the department of job and family services. The office consists of a youth ombudsman, a family ombudsman, and at least two regional ombudsmen. The office shall investigate and resolve concerns made by or on behalf of children and families involved with public children's services agencies.	The family ombudsman will be appointed by the governor, while the youth ombudsman will be appointed by the governor with advice from overcoming hurdles in Ohio youth advisory board. Employees of the office may not hold any office of trust or profit, serve on any political party committee, or engage in any activity interfering with the duties of the office.	The office will receive, investigate, and resolve complaints; establish procedures for receiving and resolving complaints; access records; and report annually.
Oklahoma <a href="#">OAC-340:2-3-71</a>	<a href="#">Office of Client Advocacy</a>	The office of client advocacy operates within the Oklahoma department of health. The office is led by the advocate general.	The advocate general must be an Oklahoma bar association member and should have at least 3 years' experience as an attorney.	The advocate general monitors and reviews grievance procedures; investigates complaints; investigates allegations of abuse by persons responsible for children; coordinates administrative hearings; files reports; develops policies and procedures; and maintains confidentiality.
Oregon Or. Rev. Stat. § 417.810	<a href="#">Office of Children's Advocate</a>	The governor's advocacy office, also known as the office of children's advocate, is housed in the department of human services and reports to the governor. The children's advocate responds to concerns regarding child abuse and neglect, child protective services, and issues relevant to individual child welfare cases.	With the concurrence of the governor, the director of human services appoints the children's advocate. The children's advocate shall be a person who has background and experience in law enforcement with particular emphasis on crimes involving child victims or social work with particular emphasis on child abuse.	The children's advocate educates the public about the detection and prevention of child abuse; receives and reviews complaints; maintains confidentiality; and conducts criminal record checks.
Rhode Island R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-73-1 et seq.	<a href="#">Office of the Child Advocate</a>	The office of the child advocate is an independent and autonomous state agency responsible for	The child advocate is appointed by the governor, with the advice and consent of the senate. The governor	The child advocate provides an annual report to the governor and legislature; insures all

		protecting the legal rights and interests of children in state care.	shall select a candidate from a list of three nominees submitted by an advisory committee. The advocate shall serve for a term of five years.  The child advocate shall be a member of the Rhode Island bar for at least three years and must be qualified by training and experience to perform the duties of the office.	children in the child welfare system are appraised of their rights; reviews procedures; reviews complaints; provides training; has access to confidential information; has the power to subpoena; commences civil action against the state on behalf of a child; and maintains confidentiality.
South Carolina  S.C. Code of Laws Ann. Sections 63-11-2210, et.seq.	<a href="#">Department of Children's Advocacy</a>	The department of children's advocacy is an independent state agency. It is headed by the state child advocate. The department ensures children receive adequate protection and care from state services and programs.	The governor appoints the state child advocate from three candidates recommended by the joint citizens and legislative committee on children and upon advice and consent of the senate for a term of 6 years. The state child advocate must possess at least a bachelor's degree, have 10 years of experience regarding children's issues, and must not have previously served as the director of a state agency.	The state child advocate receives and investigates complaints regarding child-serving agencies; receives and investigates critical incident reports; maintains confidentiality; has access to confidential information; can issue subpoenas; makes recommendations; publishes an annual report; educates the public; and serves on the child fatality advisory committee.
Tennessee  Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-3-101 et seq.	<a href="#">Ombudsman Children and Families</a>	The ombudsman for children and families is part of the Tennessee commission of children and youth, an independent and autonomous agency with statutory authority to review children in the foster care system, kinship care or CPS and make recommendations for improvement.	No statutory appointment process or qualifications for the ombudsman.	The TCCY shall make recommendations regarding the state's child welfare system; coordinate the development of youth services programs; investigate complaints; publish annual reports; review licensing standards; and monitor foster care review boards.
Texas  V.T.C.A., Government Code § 531.990 et seq.	<a href="#">Ombudsman for Children and Youth in Foster Care</a>	The ombudsman for children and youth in foster care exists within the department of Health and Human Services.	The executive commissioner of the health and human services commission appoints the children and youth in foster care ombudsman. Neither the ombudsman nor their spouse may be employed by an entity receiving funds from the commission; control any interest in an entity receiving funds from the commission; or be a lobbyist for an entity related to the commission's operation.	The ombudsman assists children in the conservatorship of the department; receives and investigates complaints; develop procedures; help children file complaints alleging abuse; maintain confidentiality; create an outreach program; and recommend corrective actions.
Utah  U.C.A. 1953 § 80-2-1104	<a href="#">Office of Child Protection Ombuds</a>	The ombuds is an independent office within the Department of Health and Human Services, independent from the Division of Child and Family Services.	The ombuds shall be appointed by the executive director of the Department of Health and Human Services.	The ombuds receives and investigates complaints; makes recommendations; provides annual reports; and has access to confidential information.

			The ombuds shall have experience in child welfare, and in state laws and policies governing abused, neglected, and dependent children.	
Virginia VA ST § 2.2-439 et seq	<a href="#">Office of the Children's Ombudsman</a>	The office of the children's ombudsman is under the office of the governor.	The children's ombudsman is appointed by the governor subject to confirmation by the General Assembly. The individual will be qualified by training and experience and serve for four years.	The ombudsman's duties include educating the public; reviewing government programs and agencies; ensuring compliance with existing statutes; improving delivery of care to children; receive and investigate complaints; and pursue legislative advocacy.
Washington Wash. Rev. Code § 43.06A	<a href="#">Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman</a>	The ombudsman is established within the office of the governor, reports directly to the governor and acts independently of the Department of Social and Health Services.	The ombudsman is appointed by the governor, with confirmation by the senate, for a term of three years.  The ombudsman shall be qualified by training or experience, or both, in family and children's services law and policy.	The ombudsman educates the public; receives and investigates complaints; monitors child welfare procedures; reports annually; has access to confidential information; maintains confidentiality; and makes child fatality review recommendations.
West Virginia W. Va. Code, § 16B-16-1	<a href="#">Foster Care Ombudsman</a>	The ombudsman exists within the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, office of the inspector general and is independent of the Bureau for Children and Families.	The ombudsman is employed by the office of the inspector general and should possess experience as a former foster parent or in child welfare.	The foster care ombudsman advocates for the rights of foster children and foster/kinship parents; investigates and resolves complaints; promotes legislative advocacy; conducts public education initiatives; maintains a statewide reporting system; and makes recommendations and proposals for systemic reform.

Sources:

<https://www.ncsl.org/human-services/childrens-ombudsman-offices-office-of-the-child-advocate>