



VPLC

Virginia Poverty
Law Center



For Virginia's
Children

Supporting the Office of the Children's Ombudsman

We support House Bill 2381, creating the Office of the Children's Ombudsman

There are many child-serving agencies in the Commonwealth, and most do a terrific job of helping Virginia's children grow to be safe, strong, and healthy.

But, **there are always problems that may occur, even in the best-run of organizations.**

Currently, there is no place for families to go with complaints or concerns about their child's situation, and no organization to investigate and help solve any issues that may arise.

The Office of the Children's Ombudsman would be an independent agency that would independently investigate any complaints relating to the Departments of Social Services, Juvenile Justice, Health, Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Comprehensive Services, Education, and local entities providing services to children with state funds.

The Office will:

- receive complaints, investigate and assess, and attempt to resolve, any issues that arose from families of children served by state agencies.
- annually **report** its activities and findings to the **Governor**, the **General Assembly**, and the **Commission on Youth**.
- help ensure best practices are followed statewide, and prioritize the sufficiency, stability, and professionalism of those who work with children

The Virginia General Assembly has passed this bill before--but has never actually *funded* the Office. Now, there's a way to do this without general funds!

➡ ***The bill includes its own funding mechanism: the Office would be paid for by the creation of the Children's Advocacy Fund, assessing moneys against persons convicted of crimes against children. This is a very appropriate way to fund this important protection for Virginia's children.***

This is one of the recommendations of JLARC's Foster Care report.

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