



STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN

6720 FORT DENT WAY, SUITE 240
TUKWILA, WA 98188
(206) 439-3870 • (800) 571-7321 • FAX (206) 439-3877

Written Testimony to be Incorporated into the Record on SB 5758

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON SB 5758
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS
Tuesday, February 10, 2009
J. A. Cherberg Building, Senate Hearing Room 1, 1:30 p.m.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on Senate Bill 5758. My name is Mary Meinig and I am the Director of the Office of the Family & Children's Ombudsman ("OFCO").

SB 5758 addresses the very real need to empower youth in the dependency process by informing them of their rights. In the summer of 2007, OFCO visited 22 group homes across the state to speak directly with 120 youth about their experiences. The results of our study and the recommendations that arose from our work is entitled, "Listening to Youth in Group Care" and is available on our website at: http://www.governor.wa.gov/ofco/reports/ofco_07-08_youth.pdf. We concluded that youth need to be engaged in all aspects of decision making about their case plans and placement and that they need to better understand their legal rights and the dependency process. We recommended providing them with a written pamphlet informing them of their rights, which the Mockingbird Society¹ has put together and we believe is now in use.

However, it can be important to communicate information in more than one format. As we know, this generation is the "computer generation" so making information available on a public website that youth may access makes good sense.

Thank you to Senators Hargrove, Kauffman, Murray, and other members for your sponsorship of this measure, and for providing us this opportunity to comment.

¹ Mockingbird Society is a nonprofit organization based in Seattle committed to reforming public policy and law to better support foster youth and caregivers.