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Written Testimony to be Incorporated into the Record on HB 2680

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON HB 2680
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & CHILDREN'S SERVICES
Thursday, January 21, 2010
John L. O'Brien Building, House Hearing Rm E, 8 a.m.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 2680. My name is Mary Meinig and I am the Director of the Office of the Family & Children's Ombudsman ("OFCO").

HB 2680 creates a separate chapter regarding guardianships for children in foster care. This legislation is a step toward Washington's implementation of the 2008 federal law, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act.

We support the intent of HB 2680, which is to increase permanency options for dependent children through guardianship, and to remove financial barriers to establishing guardianships. For some children and youth in foster care, return home or adoption are not appropriate or feasible permanency plans. Legal guardianship offers another option. OFCO routinely receives complaints from relatives and other caregivers who are seeking to provide a permanent home for a child, but who cite the lack of continued financial support as a barrier to pursuing legal guardianship. Section 9 of this bill would allow certain guardians to receive a subsidy which would remove this barrier to establishing permanency.

HB 2680 would also resolve uncertainty regarding the status of dependency guardianships.

Thank you to Representatives Roberts, Kagi, and Angel and other members for their sponsorship of this measure and for this opportunity to provide you with our thoughts on this proposal.