



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 ON HB 1128

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Thursday, January 27, 2011

John L. O'Brien Building, House Hearing Rm D, 8:00 a.m.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 1128. My name is Mary Meinig and I am the Director of the Office of the Family & Children's Ombudsman ("OFCO").

Each year approximately 300- 400 foster youth turn eighteen years old and "age out" of our foster care system. Many of these youth lack basic services to successfully transition into adulthood. As evidenced by the "Foster Care to 21 Program" Washington State has demonstrated its commitment to meet the needs of these foster youth. Under our current economic climate, I also appreciate the need to temporarily reduce the scope of such programs.

HB 1128 responds to the needs of foster youth who would otherwise "age out" by extending foster care services on a voluntary basis to 18 and 19 year old youth who are involved in educational or employment programs, or employed eighty hours or more per month. By extending foster care services for even one year beyond age eighteen, will prepare them for early adulthood and improve their chances for success.

To ensure that eligible foster youth have an opportunity to take advantage of extended foster care, the court would be required to inquire whether the dependent youth has been informed about extended foster care and the dismissal of a dependency would be postponed for six months after the youth turns eighteen.

As written, HB 1128 does not specifically address the status of youth, over the age of eighteen who presently receive extended foster care services through the “Foster Care to 21” program. I request that the legislature consider amending this bill to allow youth currently enrolled in the “Foster Care to 21” program to receive extended foster care services to age twenty-one.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with our written testimony on this legislation