

Talking Points: Proposed Amendment to HB 4

Hello, my name is _____ and I am contacting you to express concerns about a recent amendment to House Bill 4 related to a child welfare ombudsman office.

I understand that House Bill 4 has passed in the Ohio House of Representatives, and is currently being reviewed by the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee.

My concerns stem from the fact that the current design of the ombudsman office as reflected in House Bill 4 do not reflect what was asked for by Ohio youth themselves.

When Ohio foster care youth and alumni advocated regarding the budget bill, they asked for a youth-specific office, that was able to operate independently to provide accountability. They shared:

- **That current systems are failing** because youth are running away from abusive placements and being sent back to them, and calling abuse hotlines and being ignored.
- **That adults have so many other ways to be heard**, whereas children often feel alone and powerless.
- **That current and former foster youth must be involved in design** to emphasize youth-centered service delivery.

HB 110 – *LSC language*

Youth Ombudsman Office

To serve youth in biological, kinship, foster, adoptive, respite, residential, and group home placements.

Youth-Focused

The office shall be dedicated to serving youth and shall not be combined with any office serving biological, foster, adoptive, or other caregivers.

Independence and Accountability

Independent, impartial;
housed separately from ODJFS.

Inclusion of Youth Voice

The vision and design for this Office comes directly from today's youth leaders.

HB 4 – *Amendment*

Children Services Ombudsman Office

The Ombudsman would be appointed by the Governor, there would be one youth advocate on staff.

Population Served

This office proposes to serve both children and families involved with entities overseeing foster care or the placement of children.

Independence and Accountability

Housed directly under ODJFS; specifies that records will not be made public.

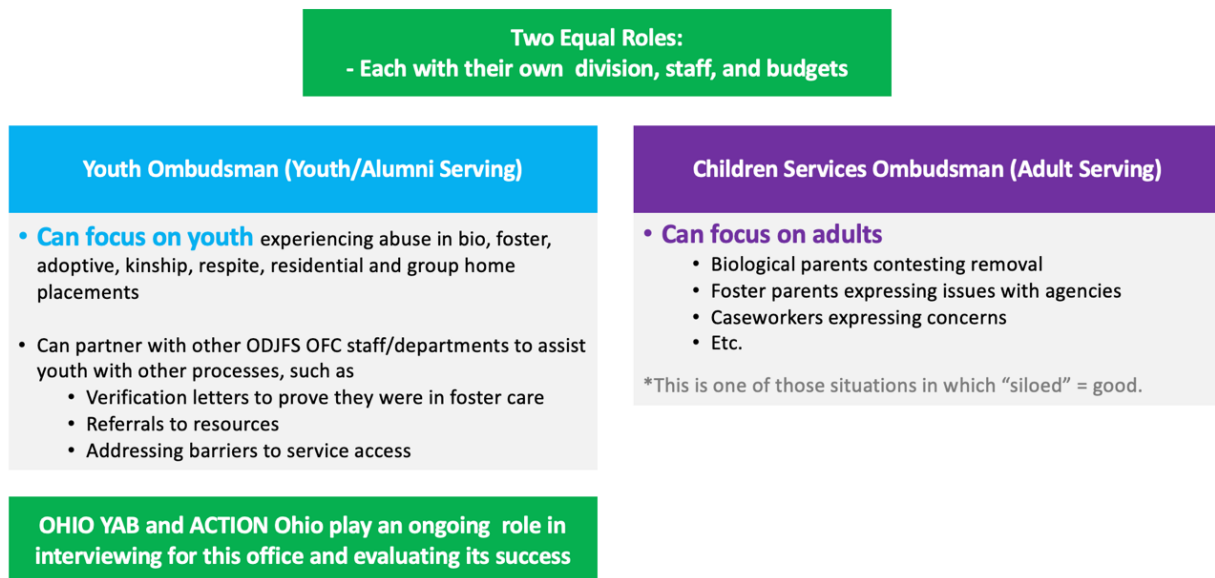
Inclusion of Youth Voice

The voices of today's OHIO YAB officers and ambassadors were not included in the proposed design.

I am calling to echo the request of Ohio foster care youth and alumni that the wording of House Bill 4 to be amended to reflect the following:

1. **Two equal roles each appointed by the governor with their own division, staff, and budgets:** Children Services Ombudsman and Youth Ombudsman.
 - (a) **Role of Youth Ombudsman Office:** To respond complaints initiated by youth and young adults.
 - (b) **Role of Children Services Ombudsman Office:** To respond to complaints initiated by an adult, such as a biological, foster, adoptive or kinship caregiver, or by a caseworker.
2. **The OHIO YAB would play a role** in interviewing for the Youth Ombudsman position and an ongoing role in evaluating the success of the office.
 - a. The Youth Ombudsman shall prepare an annual report that is evaluated by members of the Youth Advisory Board.
 - b. The OHIO YAB's evaluation will be presented to the Governor.

Representative Manchester's willingness to consider amending HB 4



Thank you so much for your time. May I please have your email address, to circle back and send you additional information?